

A Guide to Setting up and Running a Residents Association



PEABODY

This guide is an introduction to Residents Associations. It includes useful advice on forming a Residents Association and making it successful.

Improved communication between residents and Peabody helps us to understand how residents feel about the services we provide.

At Peabody we are committed to providing the best possible services. To help us achieve this, we need to know that residents needs and expectations are being met and maintained to the highest standard.

There are lots of ways to be involved. Resident Associations are just one of them.



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What is a Residents Association?

A Resident Association (RA) is a formal group of people who live in a neighbourhood, and decide that they want to get together to deal with concerns that affect their local community. The group can include tenants, shared owners, leaseholders and homeowners.

Why start a Residents Association?

Groups of residents might start an RA for the following reasons:

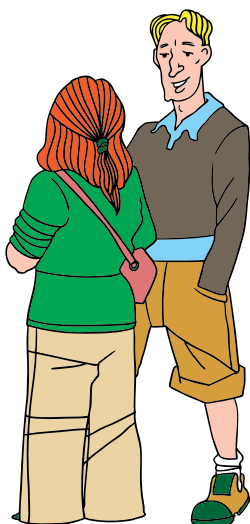
- To campaign for something positive e.g. a better play area
- To campaign against something or get services improved
- To give your community a greater voice than you would have as an individual
- To create a better sense of community in your area
- To keep residents informed of what's happening in your neighbourhood

Start-up and annual grants

Will provide funding to support local involvement with a start-up grant of £300. You will receive this grant after a Neighbourhood Manager has attended one of your meetings and received a copy of your signed constitution and you have been formally recognised by Peabody.

- An annual maintenance grant is available each year. You will not be able to apply for this until 12 months after your RA has received its start-up grant.
- Your grant will be monitored by your Neighbourhood Manager (NM) and only awarded after your RA's Annual General Meeting (AGM). To receive the grant you will need to demonstrate the TRA's successful operation in the last year.

A copy of the Recognising and Supporting Residents Associations Policy can be found on the Peabody website.



Where do I start?

Step 1: Talk to your neighbours

Knock on people's doors. What are the main issues and concerns in your area? Do they think an RA could make a difference? What homes and area will the RA cover? Don't be disappointed if people don't agree with you at first.

Step 2: Get in contact with your Neighbourhood Manager

Call: 0800 022 4040 Lines are open 8am-8pm, Monday – Friday and ask to speak to your neighbourhood manager.

Step 3: Arrange an initial meeting

Your Neighbourhood Manager can advise you where to hold your meetings. Don't forget to be aware of cultural differences when planning your meeting and make provision for people with disabilities.

Step 4: Make sure that everyone knows about the meeting

Peabody can give you a template to create a simple letter or leaflet to let people know about the date, time and place of the meeting. Make sure that the leaflet mentions the issues that concern people the most in your area and that these will be discussed at the meeting. Leaflets need to be delivered in the area 10 days before the meeting.

Step 5: Hold the first meeting

Your Neighbourhood Manager can attend your first meeting and can help you to draw up an agenda. The first meeting is a chance to talk about the issues which everyone is concerned about and give Peabody staff the opportunity to explain what setting up a RA involves.

After your first meeting you will know if residents want to set up a RA. If you do decide to set up a RA, there are a number of things that you need to do. At the next few meetings, you will all need to:

- Choose a name for your group
- Select committee members including a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer
- Agree a constitution for the group
- Be representative of the neighbourhood or community you live in. Choose 2 or 3 key aims for your RA – if you can make visible changes quickly in the area you live, then other people will see that you are effective and will want to join
- It may take a couple of months or longer for your group to get organised. Don't worry if it takes a long time. Don't rush to launch your RA before you're ready

Writing a constitution

A constitution is a list of rules for your RA. It sets out the aims of your group and how your group will work towards those aims.

Examples of constitutions can be supplied by the Resident Engagement Team, but here are examples of what it should include:

The name of the organisation

Here you state the name of your RA e.g.

'The name of the association shall be ***** Residents Association'

Aims

Here you list what you want your group to do, e.g.

1. To promote the interests of all residents in the area, and maintain good relations within the community.
2. To promote all residents rights and the maintenance and improvement of housing conditions.
3. To work towards eliminating all forms of discrimination within the community by encouraging all members to join the RA.
4. To work with Peabody and other organisations for the benefit of all residents.
5. The RA shall be non-political.



Membership

Here you state who can join the group. e.g.

1. Membership shall be open to all residents in the community.
2. All members will have an equal vote.
3. All members should actively seek to represent the various needs of the area and must not discriminate on the grounds of nationality, political opinion, race, religious opinion, gender, age, sexuality or disability.
4. Members shall at all times conduct themselves in a reasonable manner when attending meetings or any functions linked to the RA..

You may decide that only one member per household shall have a right to vote. This would need to be clearly stated.

The Committee

It is up to you to decide how many committee members you want, how they are elected and how often they should meet. But whatever you decide it needs to be stated in the constitution.

1. A committee shall be elected to carry out the business of the RA.
2. The committee shall be made up of a secretary, chair, treasurer and 3 general members.
3. The committee shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting (AGM)
4. Committee members shall carry out the duties given to them at the general meetings.
5. The committee shall meet once a month and no less than 10 times per year.
6. Minutes of all meetings shall be made available to all members.
7. Vacancies arising during the year can be filled by an election at the next general meeting. The committee may fill any vacancies arising in the committee until the next general meeting.

Finance

Finance is very important to groups and can also cause the most concern. If detailed clauses are included in the constitution this will help the group run smoothly and help the treasurer in their role.

1. All money raised by or on behalf of the RA is to be used only to further the aims of the RA.
2. The treasurer shall open a bank account in the name of the RA.
3. Cheque signatories will be nominated by the committee (one must be the treasurer). There shall be 3 signatories. These should not be from the same household or the same family.
4. All cheques and instructions to the RA's bankers shall require 2 of the agreed signatures.
5. The treasurer shall have the accounts checked by an independent person with adequate financial experience, for example, a representative of the community organisation, law centre or council for voluntary service, at the end of each financial year.
6. The accounts shall be available to all members at the AGM.

Peabody requires that a recognised group should be able to demonstrate responsible accounting methods.

Annual General Meetings

This is an important meeting as it is the meeting where the committee reports on the activities of the RA over the previous year. At this meeting all members of the committee stand down and new members are elected. Your constitution should state when and how this meeting will be held and how members will be informed of it.

- There shall be an AGM held every June at which the committee shall report on its work, present a statement of accounts and resign from their posts.
- The committee for the next year shall be elected at the AGM.
- At the AGM, members shall vote on recommendations and any amendments to the constitution.
- The secretary will notify all members of the date of the meeting not less than 21 days before the AGM.

Other general meetings

These are the other meetings throughout the year that are open to your members. This section will state how these meetings will be organised.

- There will be a general meeting open to all members every 2 months.
- A special general meeting open to all members will be held if 12 or more members request for such a meeting to the secretary. The secretary shall arrange for this meeting to take place within 21 days.
- The secretary will publicise all general meetings at least 5 days in advance.

Quorum

This is the number of members required for a meeting to go ahead. You can decide what the quorum will be for your group.

- The quorum for committee meetings of the association shall be one-third of its elected membership, or XXXX members, whichever is the greater. The quorum for all general meetings shall be one-third of the membership.

Changes to the constitution

Your constitution should develop along with your group, so it would be sensible to have a section on how to alter it.

- The constitution can only be altered at an AGM or at a Special General Meeting called for that purpose.
- Any suggested changes to the constitution must be handed to the secretary at least 14 days before the AGM.
- Changes to the constitution must be agreed by two thirds of the members present at the meeting.

Voting

This sets out how you will make your decisions.

- Any member can make a proposal, but, in order for it to be voted on by other members it must be seconded or supported by another member.
- Only members present at the meeting may vote.
- Before voting any member may propose an amendment which must also be seconded.
- No member shall exercise more than one vote.
- In the event of an equal vote, the chair shall have the casting vote.

Dissolution

Here you must state how your group can be wound up and what will happen with any funds that remain.

- The RA may only be dissolved at a Special General Meeting called for that purpose, which must be advertised before the meeting.
- A proposal to dissolve the association shall take effect only if agreed by two thirds of the members present at the meeting.
- Any assets (financial or otherwise) remaining, after the payment of all debts and liabilities, shall be given to registered charitable organisations, according to the wishes of the membership of the association.

Where funding has been received from Peabody this would be required to be returned and should be stated in the constitution.



Committee members and their roles

The committee runs the RA on a day to day basis on behalf of the members. The members of the RA are the residents in the defined neighbourhood. The committee will organise general meetings and the AGMs and will carry out any decisions made at these meetings. The membership of the committee should reflect the people it represents with regard to age, tenure, sex, ethnicity and disability whenever possible.

Chair - A Chair is elected to provide leadership, plan, call and chair meetings, and ensure that the committee works well together. A Chair should ensure that the RA keeps to its aims.

Secretary - A Secretary is responsible for administration and communication. They set the agenda with the Chair, take minutes of meetings, distribute previous minutes and agendas for meetings coming up, and occasionally write letters on behalf of the RA. Members of the RA can assist the Secretary with their allotted tasks.

Treasurer - A Treasurer oversees the management of any money collected. They pay bills and keep accurate records of money received and spent. The Treasurer works with the committee to carry out financial planning for the year. They ensure that all expenditure is agreed at a minuted meeting. They should prepare a financial report and bank statement to the committee at every meeting. At the end of the year they prepare the final account.

The Resident Involvement Team can help to provide training for all officer roles. Contact your Neighbourhood Manager for more details.

It is important that committee members do the following:

- Go to meetings regularly or send apologies if they are not able to
- Contribute to meetings
- Volunteer if they can see a job needs doing
- Put items on the agenda
- Report back when they have completed a task or gone to a meeting on behalf of the RA
- Claim back any expenses from the treasurer
- Respect confidentiality of individuals
- Don't let differences of opinion disrupt the workings of the group
- Support the committee and accept majority decisions
- Make sure they represent the views of members
- Ask members for their views on important issues

Setting the agenda

The secretary and the chair should set the agenda for each meeting, with committee members being given the opportunity to put forward items for discussion. Agendas mean that meetings are effective and structured.

A copy of the agenda with minutes of the previous meeting should be sent out at least 10 days before meetings and should include the following:

- The name of the group
- Date, time and place of the meeting
- A brief description of each item (with time limits if needed)
- Any other business
- Minutes of the last meeting
- Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting
- Date time and venue of the next meeting

An example agenda is included in this guide under Appendix 3

Minutes of meetings

It is really important that minutes are kept of each meeting as a record of the decisions that are made and actions that have been taken.

The secretary is responsible for taking the minutes, but someone else can take them if necessary.

- If you're not sure what has been decided, ask the chair to summarise.
- There is no need to say who said what and when, just what decisions have been made and who will carry out the actions.
- Write up the minutes as soon as possible after the meeting whilst details are still fresh in the memory.
- Keep notes until the minutes have been checked by the chair.
- Circulate the minutes as soon as possible after the meeting.

Finances

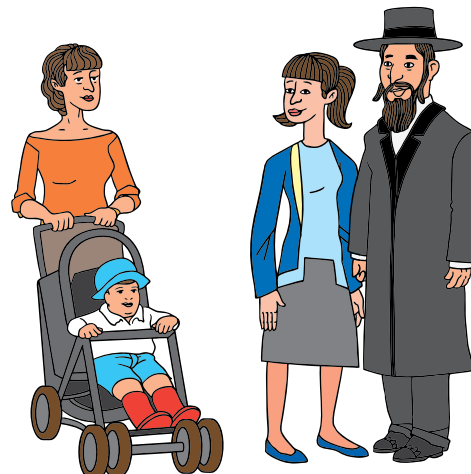
Although the treasurer keeps the accounts in order, the group's finances are the responsibility of the whole committee. There are a few basic rules when it comes to money – you must:

- Keep one clear book-keeping system
- Check the book-keeping on a regular basis. It's much easier to spot a mistake after a month than after a year
- Keep everything in a safe place. Receipts, cheque books and records of transactions are just as important as cash
- Open a suitable bank account in the name of the RA with 3 signatories
- Pay any money received into the bank as soon as you get it. This means you have a receipt that the group actually received the money
- Keep as little cash as possible and use the bank to make transactions whenever you can
- Keep receipts for every amount spent, however small. If a receipt is lost or not provided, the person claiming the money back must sign a petty cash slip, which authorises the spending
- The accounts should be open and available to all members
- Make sure you receive and keep bank statements regularly (ideally monthly)

Training

Peabody will run a programme of regular training sessions which RA Members are welcome to book on to.

We are always willing to give advice, but there are also a number of places to go for independent advice, TPAS www.tpas.org.uk 0161 868 3500 info@tpas.org.uk



Other ways to get involved

Setting up or joining a RA is just one way that Peabody residents can get involved. There are lots of different ways from completing a quick survey, to being part of our Residents Council. We have opportunities at the following levels:

Online involvement

It is now very easy to have your say without having to travel or attend meetings.

Local involvement

For a lot of people the most important area of involvement is in their block, street or community. If this is you we have a range of ways for residents to get involved in shaping the services they receive very locally.

Regional involvement

Peabody is divided into three regions: South, East and West. Each region has its own individual character, opportunities and challenges.

Strategic involvement

Peabody has 27,000 homes and there are customer facing policies and strategies which affect residents across the organisation.

More information on how you can get involved at all of these levels is available in the Resident Involvement Guide which can be found on the Peabody website.



Frequently asked questions

Is there a limit to the number of members a group can have?

A group can be as small or as large as you want it to be. For example, it could cover a small sheltered housing scheme, one street or the whole of an estate. It is up to the residents to decide the area they want the group to cover.

Should leaseholders or other residents in the area be members of the association?

If the group is going to deal with social and environmental issues as well as housing management issues then it is best that everyone living in the area covered by the group is allowed to be a member.

Can a person who works for the landlord, but who is also a tenant (e.g. a caretaker) be a member of the association?

This is similar to the question above and it is up to your group to decide. We advise that they should be allowed to be members of the group, but not a member of the committee (because of potential conflict of interest) and that they be made aware that they attend meetings as a tenant and not on behalf of the landlord. There is nothing stopping you from stating in your rules that anyone employed by your landlord cannot be elected onto the committee.

Can a councillor who is also a tenant be a member of the group?

That will be the choice of the group. We advise that they should be allowed to be members of the group, but not a member of the committee and that they are made aware that they attend meetings as a tenant and not as the landlord. There is nothing stopping you from stating in your rules that councillors cannot be elected onto the committee.

Will we need insurance?

Your group is not required to have insurance. However, you will need public liability insurance for any formal outings or events you organise. If you are given premises or equipment, you will also need to insure them.

How can I get more help and information regarding setting up an RA?

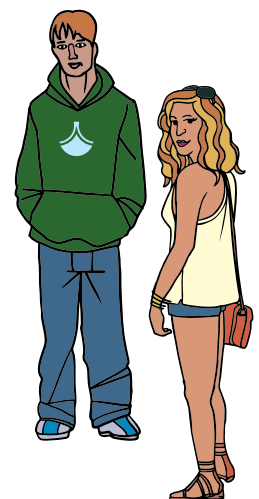
You can speak to your Neighbourhood Manager or contact the Resident Involvement Team on: 0800 022 4040 or email: get.involved@peabody.org.uk

Appendix 1

Resident association code of excellence

1. Community committees and resident groups providing an excellent service will:

- 1.1 Be courteous at all times in their dealings with staff, contractors, agencies, other residents and members of the public and never use sexist, racist, abusive or other inappropriate language;
- 1.2 represent the best interests of residents in their area/estate and try to reflect and understand the views of the community;
- 1.3 raise issues with staff, but not give officers instructions on the day to day performance of their duties. Residents wishing to comment on the performance of an officer, should do so through an appropriate manager;
- 1.4 give Peabody staff at least two weeks' notice of all meetings. A resident group demonstrating best practice will, if possible, provide the Neighbourhood Manager dates of meetings annually from the AGM;
- 1.5 consult members and send Peabody staff details about the reason for attendance, the Agenda and list of questions at should be sent to staff at least a week before the meeting to enable preparedness. Be clear about why the staff member is required at the meeting and whether they need to be at all or part of the meeting.
- 1.6 agree a key contact (normally the chair or secretary) to liaise with Peabody staff on resident group business;
- 1.7 adhere to protocols for corresponding with Peabody staff on behalf of the committee. When liaising with Peabody, committee members should be clear with regard to whether they are expressing a personal view of representing the views of the committee. If a member of the committee is sending out correspondence or acting on behalf of the group, the approach should be agreed in advance by the committee, and copies of any correspondence should be provided to all committee members;
- 1.8 provide feedback to members about discussions at forums;
- 1.9 not disclose information deemed confidential. From time to time, residents will acquire and have access to confidential information and information that has not yet been made public. When residents are advised that information is confidential it must not be disclosed to other people under any circumstances. Residents may be asked to sign an agreement that such information will not be disclosed. Such information must not be used for personal gain;
- 1.10 produce minutes of all meetings, making them available to all in attendance. All residents can receive copies upon request. The Neighbourhood Manager can also request a copy of minutes:
- 1.11 produce annually, at least one newsletter to update members and residents with regard to activities. Newsletters should subscribe to the guidance attached as appendix A
- 1.12 hold an open and accessible AGM and at least one more Open Meeting for residents during the committee year. Adequate notice should be provided and every effort should be made to encourage and promote attendance. This may include for example, use of notice boards, letters and or flyers.
- 1.13 run meetings in a professional and welcoming manner with committee members seated at the front of Open Meetings and Annual General Meetings with members and guests introduced to delegates;
- 1.14 hold and observe written financial procedures and have three bank signatories who should be unrelated and from different households. Two signatures will be required on each cheque. Written updates of income and expenditure should be presented at each meeting and a comprehensive list of the income and expenditure of the year should be given to all members attending the AGM for scrutiny;
- 1.15 have a clear and effective policy for dealing with breaches and disputes;
- 1.16 demonstrate how the group has developed committee skills and encouraged new members. Peabody will fund and promote members to achieve training to assist them in their role;
- 1.17 hold meetings in accessible and appropriate venues for all residents and staff;
- 1.18 consult members appropriately and adequately and feedback outcomes of consultation small sheltered housing scheme, one street or the whole of an estate.



Appendix 1 continued

2. Peabody staff providing an excellent service will:

- 2.1 Adhere to Peabody's Service Standards for Involvement and the Customer Charter;
- 2.2 produce a leaflet which will inform residents about Resident Groups in the locality and other involvement opportunities;
- 2.3 use the most appropriate range of methods to inform and engage with residents;
- 2.4 provide specific feedback on what we have done in response to residents' involvement;
- 2.5 use a range of ways to make meetings easier to get to and more effective, including plenty of notice suitable times, attendance allowances;
- 2.6 make consultation exercises more effective by explaining what the consultation can and cannot change, keeping people informed of outcomes, and giving enough time to respond;
- 2.7 support people's participation through relevant training and IT resources, opportunities for personal development, paying expenses valuing diversity and providing involvement opportunities that meet specific individual as well as communities' needs;
- 2.8 attend all relevant meetings when requested, bearing in the that such availability will sometimes be restricted by personal or operational commitments;
- 2.9 attend as guests of resident groups for part or all of the meeting as agreed in advance;
- 2.10 arrive punctually for meetings and events and provide at least 3 hours' notice of cancellation;
- 2.11 aim to find a replacement staff member if unable to attend;
- 2.12 provide contact details to resident association chairs and secretaries;
- 2.13 staff will observe and respect the rules of confidentiality at all times when handling and processing information;
- 2.14 wear a visible name badge at all meetings;
- 2.15 behave in a professional and businesslike manner at all times;
- 2.16 explain things in clear jargon-free language;
- 2.17 develop a plan of agreed actions after each meeting attended and report back, verbally or in writing, to the committee at the following meeting the status or outcome of those actions;
- 2.18 work to establish and keep up to date, a Peabody events calendar published on the website to enable residents to check that proposed meeting dates do not clash with other events or relevant religious dates;
- 2.19 Neighbourhood Services will produce an annual report to provide an update with regard to the performance of groups.

3.0 Conflicts of Interest

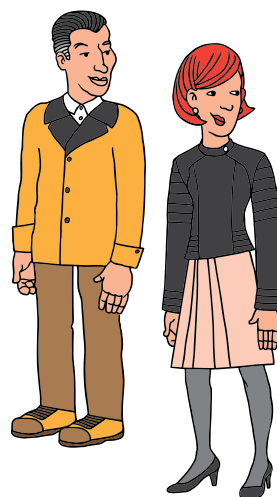
- 3.1 Individual members should disclose any interest whether personal or on behalf of any group they represent, that may affect or influence their approach to the matter under discussion.
- 3.2 Members should not expect to receive more or less favourable treatment by Peabody staff because of their membership of the Residents Association RA.
- 3.3 Members must use Peabody's normal procedures for reporting repairs, complaints etc.

4.0 Confidentiality

- 4.1 Members should respect the confidentiality of all individual residents, whether present or not and not mention specific individual cases which may cause embarrassment or identification of an individual.
- 4.2 Any information or items shared with Gallions that is of a confidential nature must not be disclosed to anyone else apart from members of the RA.

5.0 Breach of the Code of Excellence

- 5.1 If a member of the RA, committee or member of the public does not abide by the code of excellence the chair will warn that if they break the code again they will be asked to leave the meeting. This will be dealt with independently by the RA.
- 5.2 The chair may give the member of the RA, committee or member of the public two further warnings (a maximum of three warnings in any new meeting and/or three consecutive meetings).
- 5.3 If the member of the RA, committee or member of the public continues to ignore the code then the chair will ask the meeting to vote on whether the member should be asked to leave.



Appendix 2

Resident association financial guidelines

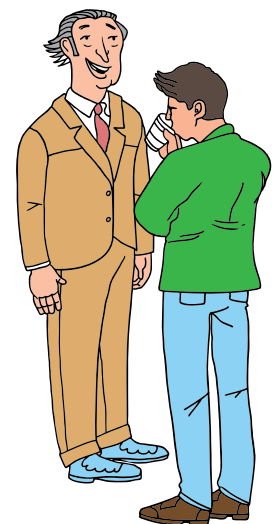
1. A bank account is to be opened with a financial Institution.
2. Two signatories are required to withdraw any money. These should be Chair, Secretary and Treasurer of the association. Signatories should not be from the same family.
3. Under no circumstances will the association use an open or pre-signed cheque.
4. The procurement of equipment or any other expenditure in excess of £50 must be subject to committee resolution.
5. An inventory of all items purchased, including purchase price, together with full details of all other expenses and expenditure must be maintained by the Treasurer. The inventory must be made available for inspection upon request at any time.
6. No monies are to be paid to committee members other than out of pocket expenses (e.g. travel, telephone, stationary etc.).
7. Where monies are claimed for travel expenses (e.g. attending Regional Forums, training, conferences etc.) the following details are required; reason for attendance, date of attendance, destination to and from, total mileage claimed.
8. Where monies are claimed for telephone calls an itemised bill is required which identifies all calls to which the claim refers.
9. Petty cash up to a maximum of £20 may be kept by the Treasurer for incidental expenses, such as stationary, stamps, out of pocket expenses etc. No money is to be issued without a receipt.
10. A proper record is to be kept of all income and expenditure which will run for each financial year. Books are to be examined by a reputable independent person outside the organisation. Copies of the examined accounts must be presented to the Annual General Meeting.
11. The Treasurer must report details of expenditure and income at each meeting of the association for the period since the previous meeting.
12. These rules are to be brought to the second meeting after an AGM for review and amendment if necessary.

Adopted on date _____

Signed _____

Treasurer _____

Chair _____





Proposed Residents Association for **Anywhere Meeting to be held on **any date at whatever time** **Anywhere Community Centre****

Agenda

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Apologies for absence
3. Reasons for forming a residents association and the type of group required
4. Choice of name
5. Nomination and election of officers and committee members
 - Chairperson
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Other committee members
6. Adoption of a constitution
7. Identification of issues of interest | concern
8. Any other business
 - How are you going to make the meeting enjoyable?
9. Date of next meeting