

Guidance to get you started

- How to get started
- Getting everyone's views
- Planning and holding your first public meeting
- What is a constitution and do I need an equal opportunities statement?
- Election of the committee
- FAQs

How to get started

Call the Customer Contact Team on [01934 526000](tel:01934526000). They'll put you in touch with your local Housing or Community Empowerment Officer. If you already have a lot of contact with another member of staff, you can ask them. They can discuss what you want to do and will give you advice, guidance and support with things like:

- Form filling
- Publicity
- Printing and distribution
- Finding funding
- Accessing training.

There are no particular rules on how resident associations should be run. You'll have to make some decisions on how to organise them, to make sure they work effectively and fairly.

Before you set up your association, think about a committee, meetings and your constitution. Click [here](#) for some example documents to help you.

Getting everyone's views

You need to get everyone's views so you have a clear idea of why an association is needed.

You need to find out if other people feel the same. Chat to people in different places, in communal gardens, shops and community centres.

Planning your first public meeting

Date and time – Try to arrange a date and time that suits most people.

Place – Arrange a convenient meeting place. It should be easy for people to get to a local community centre or school. Make sure the venue is accessible and wheelchair friendly.

Publicity – Create a clear advert for the meeting. Tell people what it's for, the date and time, the venue and who to contact if they're interested in getting involved. Here's an example flyer.

Your first public meeting

Introductions – Make everyone feel welcome when they arrive by introducing them to other people. You could get discussion going by asking everyone to say why they're keen to set up a group. This will help you decide how to move forward and make decisions.

Set the agenda – Keep the meeting short and concise. People will feel it's been worthwhile if ideas have been discussed and decisions made. Here's an [example agenda](#).

Code of conduct – It's good to have a code of conduct. It's a useful tool when holding open or general meetings, to make sure all members comply. We have a model code of conduct [here](#).

Take minutes – You'll need to make sure someone takes minutes. This is important as it records what happens in the meeting. Click [here](#) for example minutes.

What is a constitution and do I need an equal opportunities statement?

Constitution

We recommend that you draw up a constitution, particularly if you are managing money.

A constitution is a document, produced by a group, stating its aims, objectives, membership and rules.

It's essential that a group has a good constitution, as it's the document that should be referred to if there are any questions about the way the group is run, how and when meetings happen, who looks after the money and what to do if a dispute occurs. Knightstone will ask you to adopt a constitution to receive funding from us. We have a model constitution [here](#).

Equal opportunities statement

We ask all associations to agree to an equal opportunities statement to make sure that the association is fair to all. You can use the equal opportunities statement [here](#), or you can develop your own.

Election to the committee

What is a committee?

The committee is elected by the members to carry out the work of the association. The committee will organise general meetings of all the members, and the group's Annual General Meeting. It must carry out the actions made at these meetings.

There's no set way of organising a committee but there are ways of working which are more common and useful than others.

Try to make sure that the committee represents all the people in your association - men, women, young people, older people, and people with a disability, and so on.

Officers of the committee are made up of a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer.

The Chair

The Chair is the person elected for a fixed period of time to guide the association to achieve its aims and chair the meetings.

The Chair will:

- Plan meetings with at least one other person
- Prepare an agenda
- Chair meetings by ordering the discussion, encouraging everyone to have their say and making sure meetings run smoothly
- Co-ordinate the work of the association and that of other officers
- Make sure decisions are acted on and work is shared out among interested residents and association members.

The Secretary

The Secretary is elected for a fixed period of time to keep all records of meeting together and arrange meetings.

The Secretary will:

- Organise meetings and help to plan the agenda
- Inform everyone of the date and time of meeting in advance
- Take notes at meetings (minutes) and give to everyone
- Receive and send out mail for your association
- Gather information and correspondence together so everyone sees it
- Write and receive letters on behalf of the association
- Keep a record of membership, important phone numbers
- Keep a register of members and accessible files for minutes, agendas and correspondence.

The Treasurer

The Treasurer is the person with overall responsibility for the association's finances. The amount of work involved will vary depending on the size of the organisation and the amount of money you receive.

The Treasurer will:

- Keep records of all money paid into and out of the resident association's bank account
- Make sure all money received is paid into the account
- Issue receipts for money received

- Pay bills
- Keep the committee regularly informed of financial position by providing written statements, bank statements and bringing books to meetings.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How do we set up a bank account?

Many banks offer Treasurers' accounts/ bank accounts for community groups (these are the kind of accounts that are suitable for voluntary or community groups and resident associations). However, it's worth shopping around to see who has the lowest charges. Also, if you think your association will have a large amount of money, it may be worth having a deposit and current account so that you can earn interest.

Make sure you've decided what type of bank account you want, then the authorised signatories should go to the bank along with the following documents:

- Minutes of the last meeting and a record of a discussion that has taken place around opening an account and a maximum amount that can be drawn by cheque, as well as names of the authorised signatories
- A letter from Knightstone confirming that the Resident Association has been set up, and the names of committee members
- A copy of the signed constitution.

Advice about choosing a bank and information about how to open an account can be found [here](#).

Q: How do we get funding for our association?

Resident associations can play an important role as a channel for communication between us, our residents and, in some cases, the wider community. To recognise our commitment to promoting this form of participation, we give start-up assistance to resident associations. The groups we support must be representative of the other residents of the area in which it works.

An association which meets the criteria can receive a start-up grant of £200. Associations will only receive funding for the first year of operation as we encourage groups to be self-sufficient in the long term.

We offer a small set up grant for items such as

- Stationery, postage, phone calls
- Room hire, crèche facilities, babysitting costs, refreshments
- Transport costs, public address hire
- Social events.

If residents of other housing associations are part of the resident association, we suggest match funding is explored. We only provide funding for one association per scheme.

Recognition criteria:

- The group is a resident association and is defined by a document similar to the model constitution
- The group has an equal opportunities statement (similar to the model statement) and takes positive steps to encourage participation from anyone living in the area it represents
- The group provides an annual statement of its accounts (if Knightstone provide grants)
- All residents are invited to any general meetings and the annual general meetings.

If a group does not meet the criteria, the relevant Knightstone manager will decide whether officers attend all, some or none of the meetings, assuming our representative is invited. Officers may continue to work with the group either to assist in moving towards meeting the recognition criteria or merely to maintain the group as it is, if that meets residents' requirements.

If you'd like to access this start-up grant and think you meet the eligibility criteria, please ask for your lead officer via our Customer Contact Team: [01934 526000](tel:01934526000)

You might be able to apply for further funding through the Knightstone Community Improvement Fund if you're already working with one of our Knightstone Officers.

Your association may also be able to apply for external funding. Most agencies that offer small grants will want the association to prove it is non-profit making. We recommend that your association includes *clause 9.3* of the model constitution, which covers this.

You can get help to find funding (for a small fee):

- www.grantsonline.org.uk
- <http://www.idoxgrantfinder.co.uk/>

Local Community Foundations in the West of England and Somerset:

- www.quartetcf.org.uk
- www.somersetcf.org.uk

Local libraries will be able to help you by providing computer access:

https://www.librarieswest.org.uk/client/en_GB/default

Customers can use their library membership card in any one of the 150+ libraries across Bath & North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset, Somerset and South Gloucestershire, Dorset and Poole. You can borrow, return, renew and reserve items, and use the computers to access the internet and office programmes.

We can also provide the following practical support:

- **General advice:** the lead officer can ask a relevant officer to provide advice on legal, housing, financial issues, welfare benefits (where able and appropriate to do so). The lead officer can provide information on resources and direct associations to training or funding opportunities

- **Knightstone information:** the lead officer can ask a relevant Knightstone officer to provide information on how rents are calculated, how service charge are calculated, policies and procedures, details on repairs or servicing
- **Assistance from officers:** preparing for meetings, attending meetings, giving presentations. Support to access grants.

Local community support organisations which offer training and guidance for groups:

- <http://www.vansweb.org.uk/> Voluntary Action North Somerset
- www.mendipcommunitysupport.org.uk Mendip Community Support
- <http://www.ssvca.org.uk/> South Somerset Association for Voluntary and Community Action
- <http://www.engagews.org.uk/> West Somerset Volunteer Centre
- <http://vol-centre.org.uk/> Volunteer Centre Bath & North East Somerset
- <http://www.voscur.org/> provides direct support services and specialist advice to voluntary organisations and social enterprises across Bristol. For funding info see the Funding Hub: [http://www.supporthub.org.uk/about us](http://www.supporthub.org.uk/about_us)

Examples of ways they can support your organisation's development are:

- Fundraising and income generation
- Human resources
- Strategic review and business planning
- Committee and board development
- Marketing and communications
- Volunteer management
- Outcomes, theory of change and monitoring
- Starting a new community organisation
- Skills audit and training

You might want to consider taking out TPAS membership.

This gives you a voice in the housing sector and provides you with ongoing support and guidance to help you to be involved with your landlord or to lead activity in your community.



You can join TPAS:

- As an independent tenant group (with two or more members) £100.00
- As an individual tenant £50.00

If you would like to sign up to TPAS membership please contact their Membership Team.
<http://www.tpas.org.uk/tenant>

Q: Is our association insured to hold events?

Your association will need to get its own public liability insurance if you are putting on events. You'll need to make sure risk assessments have been carried out and comply with the insurance requirements.

One example of an organisation that offers community group insurance is Markel UK. Trustee indemnity insurance is also available for management and committee members.
<https://www.markeluk.com/>