



**“How To”**

# **Increase Participation**

**In  
Tenant &  
Resident Associations**

**“Building Communities”**

August 2004

**No.2**

**Southwark Housing Department is currently undergoing a Best Value Review. This will result in major changes in the way the department is organised and managed. The current Neighbourhood structure will be changed to eight Management Areas. When this is in place the services currently available from the Housing Community Development Section will be available from Resident Involvement Teams based in each of the eight Areas, and information will be made available to all Tenant and Resident Associations on who to contact and how to do so. Until these changes take place please continue to contact Housing Community Development Section and your Neighbourhood Community Development Officer.**

**Housing Community Development Section**

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**“How To”**

**Increase Participation**

**In**

**Tenants & Residents Associations (T&RAs)**

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# Introduction

At the inaugural Tenants' Conference held in May 1999, one of the recommendations was to produce a "Troubleshooting Pack". This pack was designed for Tenant & Resident Associations (T&RAs), and produced in May 2000. As the pack was being developed it became clear that the information did not cover certain issues or situations.

This is the second "How To" pack of four and others are being considered. It is aimed at T&RA committee members to help them work in an effective, accountable and democratic way and hopefully will be of assistance when your committee considers ways to expand its membership.

Other packs produced by the Housing Community Development Team:

		<b><u>UPDATED</u></b>
<b>"Troubleshooting pack for T&amp;RAs"</b>		<b>August 2004</b>
<b>"How to" pack No. 1</b>	<b>Annual General Meetings</b>	<b>August 2004</b>
<b>"How to" pack No. 2</b>	<b>Increase Participation</b>	<b>August 2004</b>
<b>"How to" pack No. 3</b>	<b>Financial Practice</b>	<b>August 2004</b>

# PART I

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## An Overview

The majority of T&RAs have problems in recruiting and keeping new residents within their Associations. In addition many Associations do not reflect the age, ethnic or gender profile of the area they represent. At least one Association in the borough comprised of a committee that is entirely over 60 and white, whilst others comprise a wide range of members in terms of age and ethnic origin. Information from the thirty-two returns provided for the Tenant Fund in 1999/2000 show that:

32% of T&RA committee members are male  
68% of T&RA committee members are female

1% of T&RA committee members are under 20  
29% of T&RA committee members are between 20-40  
33% of T&RA committee members are between 40-60  
37% of T&RA committee members are over 60

80% of T&RA committee members are white  
17% of T&RA committee members are black  
3% of T&RA committee members do not describe themselves as black or white

### What can we do?

- Agree policies and statements that encourage greater participation, e.g. an Equal Opportunity statement or a Code of Conduct for meetings that become part of the constitution, so it is clear that discrimination is not tolerated.
- Publicise policies and achievements widely in newsletters or leaflets.
- Provide translations or interpreters and advertise this in the publicity. It is not good if no-one knows how to get the translations or whether an interpreter will be present. If you know members of any community who have language difficulties, find out if they have friends or family who can interpret for them.
- Hold events like dominoes, cards and bakaram rather than only bingo sessions.
- Ensure meetings are welcoming and not cliquey; support and welcome new members when they arrive.
- Find out the issues that affect the community – racial harassment, racism, religious meeting places, education, policing, childcare, anti-social behaviour, youth provision, etc – and then campaign and lobby in support of the community.

- Challenge and deal with any discriminatory behaviour.
- Understand the differences between different cultures, e.g. dominoes is a Caribbean game, not an Asian game. Cultural differences may inhibit some communities from attending meetings, e.g. Muslim tenants may not attend meetings serving alcohol. Encourage residents to bring along friends and family to meetings so that they do not feel isolated. Explain what a T&RA is, as some people may not have had a similar organisation in their country of origin.
- Make every effort to inform new people of your Association and how to join.
- Take a clear public stand against harassment. Do not allow discriminatory remarks or actions and support campaigns by tenants raising harassment issues.
- Consider people with disabilities. Where possible, information should be in large print. Similarly, organise a signer for those with impaired hearing. Make sure that venues are accessible. Find out if there are steps and staircases, whether the building has a lift or ramp, wide doors and suitable toilet facilities. Put these details on the publicity as well as phone numbers so that people can ring to check details.
- Encourage people from all backgrounds to ensure that a cross section of the community participates in meetings. Stand for the committee and be involved in all campaigns.
- Have meetings at a time when carers can come and provide childcare facilities – either a crèche or carer payments. Encourage people to tell you if they have problems that are stopping them from attending meetings so that you can change the time or meeting place.
- Make links with other community groups, women's groups, disabled groups, play groups, and black and minority ethnic groups. Invite them to speak at your meetings.
- People may be afraid to come to meetings alone. Offer a service to accompany people to and from meetings.
- Be imaginative and try new ideas. Where ideas fail try to evaluate why. It is not good enough to say "we've tried to involve people in the T&RA by having a multicultural evening but no one turns up". T&RAs need to find out why, for example, racial harassment could be a major problem and tenants were afraid to leave their homes in the evening

## PART 2

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### A Annual Report

Officers and committees should produce an annual report of the work and achievements of the Association over the past year, to be presented at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). This report will clarify what the committee has achieved – often more than you think. It is also useful to look forward at the things that need completing or starting over the coming year.

The report should cover achievements, successes and failures. A positive speech gives a lead to the Association and makes it more likely that new people join the committee. Would you join a committee that has had no successes, argues amongst itself and suffers from poor attendance?

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### B Behaviour

To have any chance of keeping people involved they must feel that the meeting is something they would like to come back to. If a meeting is totally dominated by one individual's bad behaviour or an argument between members that gets out of control, people will stop coming. Associations need to have policies that prevent this and offer ways of dealing with it should such events arise.

The T&RA Constitution has clauses that set out what is acceptable behaviour to ensure that everybody attending a meeting can participate and contribute fully. A model Code of Conduct for meetings that Associations could adopt is attached as an *Appendix* to this pack.

It is important that everybody knows that there is a Code of Conduct and it would therefore be appropriate to adopt the code at a General Meeting and possibly an AGM. The code should then be publicised widely in newsletters and prominently displayed in T&RA offices and the lobby of the hall.

To help ensure meetings achieve their aims and objectives it is useful to adopt a set of “ground rules” that set out how the meetings could be conducted – a model set is attached as an *Appendix* to this pack. Ground rules indicate how people should behave and the commitment needed to ensure that a meeting is successful. Ground rules indicate how people should behave and the commitment needed to ensure that a meeting is successful. Good ground rules will help everyone to participate fully!

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## **B Block Representatives**

T&RAs need to keep in contact with their members. This can be made easier if there are committee members representing each area of the estate. One way is to elect “block representatives” who will carry out the following functions:

- Talk to their neighbours about what the Association is doing.
- Get ideas from neighbours about what the Association should be doing.
- Act as a point of contact for people to raise issues at Association meetings.
- Distribute leaflets and information to people who live in the block.

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## **C Challenging prejudice, discrimination and bad behaviour**

Challenging racism, sexism, anti-lesbian and -gay prejudice and all other forms of bad behaviour or discrimination is not only the responsibility of the Chair – it is the responsibility of the entire committee.

Equally, it is the responsibility of the committee to support and take seriously any member of the T&RA or committee who brings up an Equal Opportunity issue.

**Here are some reasons why it is necessary to challenge prejudice and discrimination in their group:**

- Because it is wrong.
- Because women, black people, lesbians and gay men and people with disabilities will not feel welcome at meetings.
- Because not challenging could be seen as an indication that the T&RA agree with such prejudice and discrimination.
- Because you feel angry about what has been said.
- Because not challenging will weaken the committee.
- Because such behaviour breaks the T&RA’s Constitution.

**If you make a challenge the following points could be considered:**

- The main concern about challenging is fear of what the person’s response will be or whether the committee will support you and deal with the issue.
- People often get defensive, angry or embarrassed when the subject of Equal Opportunities is brought up.

- It is best to be clear and calm. Concentrate on challenging what has been said, rather than the person who said it. Try to explain what is wrong with the statement.
- You might start by saying:  
 “I hope/I’m sure that I am not the only person who feels this way, but...”  
 “I think it is important to look at what has just been said because...”
- If you feel that the situation is hopeless and that challenging will leave you isolated or vulnerable on your estate seek advice and support from the council or people outside the Association.

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## **C            Childcare**

From 1993 the Tenant Fund set aside a budget to encourage T&RAs to make meetings and events more welcoming. The Equal Opportunity Fund will pay the cost of childcare at an Annual General Meeting. The Association is responsible for arranging and paying for the crèche. Costs will be paid following submission of an invoice. The Association must advertise the provision of crèche facilities on the notice advertising the Annual General Meeting and the following should be taken into consideration:

- Childcare and/or crèche provision should always be offered and advertised on the notice of the meeting.
- Under the Children Act 1989 there needs to be a minimum of two crèche workers for each crèche.
- A separate, warm room is required. Crèche packs can be borrowed from the Neighbourhood/Area Office.
- Expenses for childcare and other caring responsibilities at AGMs can be claimed from the Tenant Fund.
- For people with caring responsibilities attendance may be a problem. There are certain provisions that can assist these people:
  - Have a defined “meeting finish time” so that carers can give accurate information of when they will be home.
  - Carers will occasionally attend meetings with children. Ensure that pencils and paper are provided if a crèche pack is not available.
  - After the meeting discuss with the carer any ways of helping to improve the situation of the carer and child alike.

If you do not have a crèche, a childcare/carer allowance may be paid to parents/carers who attend the meeting. The Tenant Fund Management Committee (TFMC) will pay £4.75 per hour to carers and babysitters.

The T&RA should continue the good practice at the AGM by ensuring there is childcare provision at committee meetings if required. This would need to be funded from within the Association's own resources. The Tenant Fund grant payable to Associations was introduced to cover costs incurred by committee members.

If the T&RA is holding a one-off event (party, festival, etc) childcare needs to feature strongly in the planning of that event. When seeking funding, childcare costs should be included. Suitable rooms/space should be identified for a crèche if desirable and childcare provision should be advertised on any publicity.

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## **C            Constitutions**

T&RAs should be of benefit to all that live within the area covered by the Association. All recognised Associations in Southwark have a constitution (set of rules) that set out clearly the responsibilities of the Association. The constitution provides a framework within which the Association works and, by having clauses that encourage participation of all residents, can create an environment where people will feel welcome.

The following clauses are included within all constitutions and are a condition of recognition:

- To promote the harmonious functioning of a multi racial community and to work towards the elimination of all forms of racism and discrimination within it.
- Membership shall be open, irrespective of nationality, race, colour, sexual orientation, and political or religious belief, to all tenants (residents) living on the estate (area).
- The composition of the committee shall as far as possible represent the multi racial character of the estate.

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## **C            Consultation**

Tenant & Resident Associations need to check with their membership what the Association should be doing in terms of their priorities and objectives.

The T&RA could carry out a questionnaire or a door knocking exercise with residents asking what their priorities are. The AGM is also a good time to get feedback and ideas. It is useful to have an item "*Issues – Priorities for the T&RA in the coming year*" towards the end of the AGM agenda.

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## **C Crèche**

*See: Childcare*

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## **D Disability**

All Tenant and Resident Associations should be committed to ensure that all people are able to be included in all the activities of the Association. For disability this can take on many forms, some visible, some not so visible. The following is a selective list:

Deafness, Allergies, Blindness, Mobility problems, Literacy, Numeracy, Language, Phobias, Medical problems.

Steps should be taken to ensure that people with disabilities are catered for in a discreet manner and basic consideration given to their needs. Steps could be:

- To ensure that there is wheelchair access.
- Provide written material in large print.
- Have a signer present.
- Awareness of the need to speak clearly without mumbling.
- Have an awareness of First Aid and an understanding of how to deal with an emergency for those with a disability, e.g. an epileptic fit or an allergic reaction.

Please contact your Community Development Officer for further information and support.

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## **E Equal Opportunities**

Tenant and Resident Associations need to represent their members and involve as many of them as possible. Equal Opportunities within an Association means that you work to ensure that everyone, especially anyone who faces discrimination, is fully included in everything that you do. Equal Opportunity policies have developed as a way of correcting the inequalities in our society. Developing Equal Opportunities is not a “one-off”, but a continuous process where T&RAs take seriously the needs of the people who suffer discrimination.

Developing Equal Opportunities is something that will take a long time. Looking at what you have achieved will spur you on to do more.

T&RAs are encouraged to be as representative as possible of the tenants on their estates. Southwark's residents are very diverse and include people who are physically and mentally challenged, people of varying sexuality, elderly, single people and those living with HIV and AIDS.

Southwark has a rich cultural mix from black and ethnic minority groups, including African, Caribbean, Asian, Turkish and Greek Cypriot, Chinese, Kurdish and Irish. Some people in these groups may have language or cultural barriers to getting involved in T&RAs.

*See: Equal Opportunity Policies*

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## **E Equal Opportunity Fund**

T&RAs in Southwark are becoming increasingly aware that many groups and individuals in the community are prevented from attending or taking an active part in Association meetings. Two reasons for this are because of caring responsibilities and mobility difficulties.

The Tenant Fund Management Committee decided at its meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1993 to set up a fund to help T&RAs address some of these issues. A budget is set aside each year for this. The Equal Opportunity Fund would give grants to T&RAs to help toward the cost of the following:

### **Annual General Meetings**

- Payments of all crèche fees and carers allowance if advertised on AGM notice to all residents. (This will be paid on production of notice and invoice to the Funding Monitoring Officer.)
- Payment of signer or interpreter.
- Provision of transport.

### **Minor Adaptations to Buildings to Improve Access**

If providing minor adaptations to the hall would enable more people to attend meetings and your Association does not have the funds, you can apply to the Equal Opportunity Fund. If you wish to apply for other items, which you feel would encourage or enable more people to get involved in your T&RA, please apply. The Tenant Fund Management Committee will consider your application.

If you wish to apply please phone Housing Community Development Section on 020 7525 4025.

*See: Childcare, Equal Opportunity Policies.*

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## E Equal Opportunity Policies

Equal Opportunity policies are designed to address the discrimination from the past and present, as well as discrimination still happening in terms of sections of the community not being represented in positions of power, ability to obtain jobs, education or recognition solely because of their sex, race, ethnic origin or age.

It is not about giving preferential treatment to certain sections of the community, it is about giving them a fair chance and having policies to ensure this.

Listed below is a possible Equal Opportunity statement that T&RAs may wish to adopt:

- 1) The **(name of T&RA)** believes that it must work towards the harmonious functioning of a multi-racial community.
- 2) That it is committed to opposing all forms of discrimination and oppression which includes racism, sexism and all forms of discrimination faced by ethnic communities, women, gay men and lesbians and people with physical or mental disabilities. The Association is also committed to acting without discrimination on the grounds of nationality, political or religious belief.
- 3) The Association will introduce measures to remove direct or indirect discrimination in any of its activities.
- 4) The Association will work towards the development of awareness of Equal Opportunity issues. It will also adopt a strategy for the achievement of racial equality and genuine equality of opportunity.

The first clause is contained within the objectives of all T&RAs in Southwark.

The second clause commits the Association to opposing all forms of discrimination and act without discrimination itself.

The third clause discusses action to remove direct and indirect discrimination, e.g. sexist and racist language should not be permitted and needs to be challenged. Meetings need to be held when people who may be vulnerable feel safer, e.g. the elderly.

The final clause discusses the need for a plan of action to publicise the policy and the need to adopt a strategy to encourage equality of opportunity.

It is important to publicise an Equal Opportunity statement or the fact that a T&RA is trying to address issues of equality. For example, if a T&RA adopts an Equal Opportunity policy they could write a statement on all their letters.

**“Name of T&RA – working towards Equal Opportunities”**

or

**“Name of T&RA – striving to be an Equal Opportunity Association”**

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## **M Meetings**

A meeting, often the AGM, is usually the first impression a tenant or resident has of a T&RA. It is therefore important to give a good impression. Listed below are some hints:

- Welcome new members as they arrive.
- Record who attends with their address.
- Have childcare provision available.
- Introduce everybody, especially speakers and others on any “top table”.
- Explain what is going to happen, why the meeting has been called and what it will hopefully achieve.
- Minute the meeting.
- Have an interesting agenda that is relevant to people on the estate.
- Do not use jargon or abbreviations.
- Decide whether the meeting is smoking or non-smoking.
- Have a refreshment break for people to get to know one another.
- Have short meetings.
- Have a finishing time and stick to it.
- Explain to people how they can get involved.
- Set a date and time for the next meeting.

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## **M Monitoring**

A requirement of the Tenant and Leaseholder Participation Compact is that there is a consistent monitoring and assessment of participation structures. Two elements of this are:

- To monitor tenant representatives and ensure equality of opportunity.
- To check that the council's procedures for tenant consultation involves tenants from all parts of the community.

Attached as an *Appendix* is a draft monitoring form, which was introduced in 1999 as part of the Tenant Fund application form. T&RAs could agree to carry out their own monitoring and if there are significant sections of the community who do not get involved the Association could set out as one of its objectives to try to improve this situation.

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## **R Racial Harassment**

If a T&RA is committed to representing the needs and aspirations of all its members then it must recognise and support its members when they come under attack. Making a clear statement of the Association's position on racial harassment can also help to recruit new members, as those opposed to such behaviour would hopefully recognise and support them.

The following is a statement from the Commission for Racial Equality Report entitled "Room for All":

"The Association must take a clear public stand against all forms of racial harassment. There should be no doubt whatsoever the Association will not tolerate taunts, abuse, threats or physical attacks against any tenants because of their race, colour or ethnic origin. It is usually best to work with the landlord and to follow the procedures laid down for dealing with harassment and helping victims."

If a T&RA becomes aware of racist attacks taking place on their estate or on members of their community then the Association must address the issue. This is not an easy issue to address. Racial harassment often leads to physical violence and members of an Association committee may not know how best to deal with this kind of situation. They may be concerned for their own safety or of making the situation worse. But if the T&RA does nothing it is effectively supporting the racists and those carrying out racial harassment.

T&RAs should seek advice on what can be done to address racial harassment. There is no simple procedure for addressing this issue and each needs to be considered individually. Listed below are some suggestions.

- Contact the council and meet with the Housing Operations Manager, Victim Support Officer and Community Development Officer for advice and to discuss options.
- Hold public meetings where all the agencies and organisations concerned with the issue are invited. Make sure that meetings are held in a way that is safe for those suffering racial harassment to attend.
- Contact the families who are suffering from racial harassment to offer support. Ensure that they are not isolated and are getting the proper support from the council.
- Assist the Police or council in identifying those carrying out racial harassment.
- Put out publicity exposing racial harassment as something unwanted in the area and stating the case for a multi cultural community.
- Set up a helpline and victim support service for people facing racial harassment.

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## **R Racism within T&RAs**

If a T&RA breach their constitution and in particular act in a racist manner, action will be taken. Over the past few years there have been several instances of members of T&RA committees acting in a racist manner. These Associations have been challenged and in most cases the racist member has stood down. Tenant Council and the council have agreed a set of guidelines on dealing with racism within T&RAs.

If you become aware of an incident of racism within your Association contact your Community Development Officer for support and advice.

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## **S Signs**

It is important that people can find the location of the T&RA meeting. Even if you think that the hall's address is obvious, do not take this for granted, as new residents may not recognise the building as the tenants' hall.

Include a map on any notice that goes out on the estate and put up signs or posters leading the way.

The venue should have a clear sign stating that it is the T&RA hall and a notice board stating when the meeting for the Association will be held.

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## **S**      **Speakers**

Speakers and guests can be an important technique in getting people to a meeting, especially if they are there to talk on an issue that is relevant. Advertise the speaker or guest on any publicity.

Make sure that the T&RA retain control of the meeting and that the speaker and discussion around the issues raised do not overshadow other equally important issues. Make sure that speakers do not use the platform as a means for putting across a purely party political message.

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## **T**      **Timing of Meetings**

It is very important to get a good turnout at meetings from a cross section of the area the T&RA represents. Therefore, try to set the meeting when it will be easy for all sections of the community to attend.

Meetings are traditionally held in the evening. This is to enable those who are working to attend. It is important to note that people who could attend during the day may not be able to in the evening. The time of the meeting in the evening is also important:

- 5.30 p.m. – 6.30 p.m. is often too early for those working.
- Starting at 7.30 p.m. could mean that the meeting would go until very late, causing difficulty for childminders.

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## **T**      **Training**

Training and support is available on most of the issues that make an effective T&RA. Contact the Training Officer at Community Development or attend one of the drop-in sessions at the Housing Office community rooms.

Members of the T&RA committee need to support each other and those with significant experience can help those who are new.

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## **T**      **Translations**

If a T&RA has a number of residents whose first language is not English it may be appropriate to translate information into their own language. Extra care should be taken, as the appropriate written language is not always obvious. Some languages

do not always use the written word in the same way that it is spoken, and there are often different local dialects that can change the meaning of words.

Translations on a notice or leaflet are beneficial as it communicates with a section of the community that might not know about an issue or event. It also gives a clear message to everybody that this is a T&RA who represent the interests of everybody, regardless of their ethnic origin, and are aware of the communities they represent.

The T&RA may be able to identify local people on the estate or in the area who may be willing to translate leaflets, or at meetings. It is unfair to rely on one person in the Association to translate and it may be appropriate to pay a fee for the service.

The Translation and Interpreting Service can help with a range of languages and is based at 19 Spa Road, London SE16 3QN. The service is open Monday to Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Telephone 020 7525 3461. Fax 020 7525 3581

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## **T           Transport**

If there are a number of people with mobility problems in one area, e.g. Sheltered Housing Unit, it may be appropriate to provide transport by hiring a mini bus.

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## **Y           Youth Involvement**

Tenant & Resident Associations are finding it harder to include young people within their active membership. The reasons for this are not totally clear but it is recognised that the agenda for many T&RA committees is not the same as that for young people. In addition, when young people do get involved they are sometimes frustrated at the slowness of getting their interests on the agenda.

T&RAs need to think up ideas and initiatives that will interest young people. A considerable number of young people see childcare as an issue of concern either at work or at home. If an Association recognises childcare and activities for children/youth as a priority they may find that younger people and young parents will start to attend the meetings.

The Equal Opportunities grants available through the Tenant Fund encourages and supports T&RAs which wish to develop initiatives with young people. Grants in this programme could fit into the following categories:

- Initiatives which support youth becoming involved in the tenant consultation structure.
- Support in setting up a youth club, e.g. starter grant to purchase equipment, premises costs, etc.
- Funding for a one-off event which has a major theme of involving young people.

- Resourcing an initiative that would include predominantly young people, e.g. computer for homework club.
- Training for T&RA representatives in youth provision.

Grants of up to £500 can be agreed by the Chair of the Tenant Fund Management Committee in liaison with the Tenant Fund Monitoring Officer. The Tenant Fund Management Committee would consider applications over £500. Details on all applications would be submitted to the Tenant Fund Management Committee.

# APPENDICES

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## Code of Conduct

To ensure that meetings are conducted in the spirit in which all opinions can be heard the following Code of Conduct will apply to **all** T&RA members and meetings.

- All members have a responsibility to conduct themselves in a way that does not cause offence to others or limits in any way their ability to participate in a meeting.
- This includes racist, sexist or other derogatory remarks or actions, behaviour that intimidates people who are speaking or wish to speak, and preventing people from expressing their views through interrupting or talking whilst they are speaking.
- The officers of the Association will point out to anyone who breaches this Code of Conduct that unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated.
- If the unacceptable behaviour persists, a motion will be put to the meeting to suspend the person from meetings.
- Future participation by such persons will be dependent on a written commitment, sent to the Chair (or Vice Chair in the event of the Chair being the perpetrator), that such behaviour will not be repeated.
- Further breaches of the Code of Conduct by such persons will result in their right to attend meetings being withdrawn.

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## Ground Rules for Meetings

- To ensure there is no racist, sexist, homophobic or discriminatory language towards people who are physically or mentally disabled or from different cultures and backgrounds.
- To actively listen to what others have to say.
- To respect the opinions of others as well as tolerance and patience.
- To give honest and constructive feedback to each other in a helpful and non-confrontational manner. It also is important to say if you disagree with another and explain why.
- To speak through the Chair, ensuring that you wait until you have been asked to make your contribution.

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## What is a Tenant and Resident Association?

A Tenant & Resident Association (T&RA) is a group of people from an area, estate or block who have come together to raise issues that affect them. Tenants, leaseholders, Housing Association tenants and owner-occupiers can all get involved in T&RAs.

T&RAs are concerned with the following:

- Repairs
- Council Policies
- Housing Management
- Harassment
- Play Facilities
- Animals
- Reducing Isolation
- Day Trips
- Rents
- Future Improvements
- Education
- Car Parking
- Play Groups
- Meeting other tenant groups
- Socials
- Youth Activities

**And much more...**

### **Why should I get involved in, or start, a Tenant & Resident Association?**

As a T&RA or resident you probably have many concerns about your flat, house, estate, landlord or the council. As one person it is harder to put forward your views, but by getting together with other tenants and residents to form an Association you will have a stronger voice. T&RAs can cover large estates or just one street or block. The more people in your area that get involved in your Association, the stronger it will be in representing the views of your estate.

### **Does Southwark encourage T&RAs?**

In Southwark, T&RAs are one of the main ways in which the council consults its tenants on anything which is likely to affect them. The council supports Associations with grants, training and a Community Development Section. Council tenants have a legal right to be consulted on certain changes of policy or practice or when the council plans to carry out work.

Southwark recognise T&RAs if they have rules and regulations set out in writing (a constitution). Associations must elect tenants and residents onto the Association committee that comprises the officer posts of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer plus general committee members to run the Association and carry out their Equal Opportunity policy. Associations should also have meetings open to all their tenants called General Meetings and keep accounts from their grant, fund-raising, etc.

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## What do Tenant & Resident Associations do?

T&RAs start up because of particular issues that tenants or residents feel strongly about and want action to be taken over.

### 1. **Campaigning**

Most T&RAs campaign for repairs or other improvements to be done. Campaigning can achieve real changes for your area. Associations may also campaign on community issues. This could be for a new hall, crèche or to support people who are facing racial or sexual or other forms of harassment.

### 2. **Consultation and Participation**

T&RAs get involved in the formation of council policies by attending Area Housing Forums or by sending a group of tenants to meet with councillors or council staff (this is called a deputation). Associations also meet with housing officers when work is planned on their estate or block. This can be consultation on the colour of paint in the lift or larger schemes such as Capital Programme Bids, Southwark Estates Initiative or Single Regeneration Budget (where the government allows the council to borrow money for estate improvements).

### 3. **Social Activities**

T&RAs also run many social activities like children's parties, day trips, bingo, coffee mornings, keep fit, etc. It is up to each Association to decide what activities it runs. Some run campaigns and social events.

### 4. **Information**

T&RAs are a good source of information for tenants and residents. The Association receives council papers and newsletters regularly and should be notified of work being carried out on the estate before it takes place. The Association committee may have had training on council structures, complaints procedures, etc, and may also send out its own newsletters.

### 5. **Building the Community**

T&RAs are part of creating a strong community spirit. People living on the same street or block soon get to know each other. The Association will mean regular contact for tenants on the estate, perhaps through a newsletter or social event. The Association may run events such as keep fit or a children's club. The Association should try to tackle problems of discrimination and help tenants who have language difficulties so that everyone from every section of the community is involved.

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## What do the Officers and Committee do?

### **Chair**

The Chair is elected to provide leadership for the committee and the Association; they ensure that the committee officers do their job and that the committee works together. They make sure that the committee works for the aims of the Association and that in doing so it does not become remote from the ordinary members.

### **Committee**

The committee is a group of people elected at the AGM who agree to meet on a regular basis to further the objectives of the T&RA. They comprise officers of the Association and other members who will take on a variety of roles over the year, supporting the officers and contributing to the debate at the committee meetings. Various members can take on issues or responsibilities that particularly interest them, e.g. publicity, social activities, parties, block representatives, representatives at Area Housing Forums or the Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations, etc.

### **Secretary**

The Secretary is responsible for the general administration and planning for the Association. They would set the agenda for meetings with the Chair, take minutes of meetings, and distribute previous minutes and agendas for upcoming meetings. They write letters on behalf of the Association and receive correspondence from a wide variety of sources and then report on this to the committee.

It can be an onerous job and for some Associations it is worthwhile sharing some of the tasks with other committee members, e.g. taking minutes.

### **Treasurer**

The role of the Treasurer is to oversee all monetary transactions and make sure that they are in order. It does not mean that the Treasurer is the only person that should keep track of the finances.

The Treasurer works with the committee to carry out financial planning for the year. They work with the committee to prepare and submit any funding applications. They set up and oversee all payments and receive income to be banked, recording all transactions. They ensure all expenditure is agreed at a minuted committee 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 for auditing purposes.

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# Monitoring of Tenant & Resident Associations

## Age, Ethnic Origin, Disability and Gender Monitoring on the committee of Tenant & Resident Associations

Southwark Council wants to monitor the make up of the committee of Tenant and Resident Associations. The data from this is for statistical use. We will not cross-reference this data with other Tenant & Residents Associations' records. We do not need your name on this form.

The Commission for Racial Equality states in its guidance document **Room for All: Tenants Associations and Racial Equality** that "Councils... must regularly monitor the progress that their Associations are making in promoting racial equality."

Your Tenant & Resident Association Constitution has the following clause: "The composition of the committee shall as far as possible represent the multi-racial character of the estate".

Southwark Council does not want to make a judgement about who you are. We ask you to fill in the form so that we can accurately monitor the composition of T&RA committees across the borough.

In the ethnic origin column please insert the number that you consider best fits you or the person you are describing:

African	<input type="text" value="1"/>	European	<input type="text" value="6"/>
Caribbean	<input type="text" value="2"/>	Irish	<input type="text" value="7"/>
Greek	<input type="text" value="3"/>	Vietnamese/Chinese	<input type="text" value="8"/>
Turkish	<input type="text" value="4"/>	United Kingdom	<input type="text" value="9"/>
Asian	<input type="text" value="5"/>	Other	<input type="text" value="10"/>

We value your help in filling in this form.

Name of T&RA

		Gender ( M / F )	Disability ( Y / N )	Age				Ethnic Origin (choose number from below )			Gay / Lesbian
				- 20	20-40	40-60	60+	BLACK	WHITE	OTHER	
1.	Example	F	N			Y		2			
2.	Chair										
3.	Vice Chair										
4.	Secretary										
5.	Treasurer										
6.	Committee No. 1										
7.	Committee No. 2										
8.	Committee No. 3										
9.	Committee No. 4										
10.	Committee No. 5										
11.	Committee No. 6										
12.	Committee No. 7										
13.	Committee No. 8										
14.	Committee No. 9										
15.	Committee No. 10										
16.	Committee No. 11										
17.	Committee No. 12										
18.	Committee No. 13										
19.	Committee No. 14										
20.	Committee No. 15										

We hope this “How to...” pack has been of use to you and provided ideas on how to deal with some issues that come up. It should be noted that there is often not just one way to deal with a problem, so please use common sense. It would be helpful to know if this pack is effective in dealing with the issues it covers and whether there are other issues you would like covered in any future pack.

It would also be useful to know your views on the overall idea and presentation. Please complete the questionnaire attached and return in the pre-paid envelope provided. Thank you.

.....✂.....✂.....✂.....

**“How to...” Increase Participation**

What I liked most about this pack:

What I liked least about this pack:

What I found most useful about this pack:

What I found least useful about this pack:

Our Association has used the following sections within the pack:

The following issues would be useful in any future pack:

Any other comments:

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Association Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Include young people	Equal Opportunities	Meetings are minuted properly	Meetings achieve something	Challenge Racism
Welcome new people	Give people something to do	Relevant Training	Good quality publicity	Positive Annual Report
Interesting meetings	Attractive interesting agendas	Clear Aims & Objectives	Find out what residents want	Publicise successes
Newsletters	Childcare	Behaviour Policy	Block Representatives	Neutral and welcoming meeting place
Deal with Cliques	Rotate officer positions	Develop individual skills	Represent everybody	Social events for everyone
No jargon - use everyday language	Deal with conflict positively	Meetings timed properly - start and finish on time	Representative committee	Short and productive meetings