

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE HOMES POLICY RECOGNITION CRITERIA FOR RESIDENT ASSOCIATIONS

1. Introduction

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) expects Housing Associations to provide opportunities for Resident Associations (RAs) to participate in a wide range of issues. It also expects Housing Associations to make the relevant resources and support available to Resident Associations so that they are enabled and empowered to operate efficiently and effectively.

This policy details the support that is provided by North Lincolnshire Homes to formally recognise a Residents Association.

2. Recognition Criteria

North Lincolnshire Homes has a responsibility to ensure that Resident Associations are being truly representative of, and are accountable to, their local communities. It must also ensure that a Residents Association that is given recognition, funding and other support is meeting the basic criteria set down below.

In order to qualify for North Lincolnshire Homes recognition, a Residents Association must:

- Represent an area where the majority of residents are North Lincolnshire Homes tenants or leaseholders
- Elect a committee and officers who will be responsible for running the association
- Adopt a constitution and adhere to it. A model constitution is provided by North Lincolnshire Homes and includes details of:
 - the boundary area to be represented
 - the aims and objectives of the association
 - the minimum number of general meetings to be held during a calendar year
 - the minimum number of committee meetings to be held during a calendar year
 - the AGM (Annual General Meeting)
 - financial information and accounts
 - a commitment to equality and diversity

The model constitution should be considered as a good practice guide that the Residents Association can amend to reflect their specific requirements and objectives. However, as a minimum, all of the above bullet points must apply.

- The association must sign up to the North Lincolnshire Homes Volunteer's Code of Conduct. This is a document produced and agreed between North Lincolnshire Homes and Community Voice that covers issues such as showing respect for others, equality of opportunities and a commitment to confidentiality where appropriate

This criteria should be considered as a binding agreement between North Lincolnshire Homes and the Residents Association, therefore the two parties must conform to the agreement and take responsibility for their part in it.

3. Support Available for New Associations

North Lincolnshire Homes will provide the following support that will help and assist Resident Associations to become self sufficient:

- Support and advice to help establish the committee members into their roles
- Assistance for holding public meetings
- Training for volunteers
- Travel to and from events (acting on behalf of the association)
- Help with developing and printing newsletters
- Grants from North Lincolnshire Homes (details included in the expenses policy)
- Signposting to other agencies and funding opportunities
- Assistance with producing an Action Plan to achieve the aims and objectives of the association (if required)
- Attendance at public meetings to provide a Housing Management Report
- Feedback to meetings on agenda items taken away for action
- Advice when planning activities for a resident association to ensure there are no barriers that would prevent people from being involved, for example:
 - venue for meetings/events to have disabled access
 - special requirements — make provisions for anyone with eye sight or hearing difficulties, e.g. resident association flyers and minutes available in large print where required, hearing loop

The above is a general guide on the support that is available but there may be other areas that require a different level of support. These areas will be considered on an individual basis.

4. Established Residents Associations

By working in partnership with North Lincolnshire Homes, support will be provided to Resident Association committee members to help them to become established in their roles and to manage their associations.

The North Lincolnshire Homes' Resident Involvement Team will support a Residents Association by attending its meetings to offer advice and support for a maximum period of 6 months after its constitution has been formerly adopted. The Residents Association

should be capable of operating independently and of adhering to the rules of its constitution by the end of this six month period.

If the association is capable of operating independently at the end of the six months period, then a North Lincolnshire Homes Officer will attend future public meetings of the Residents Association to provide a North Lincolnshire Homes Housing Management Report.

A Resident Involvement Officer will attend the associations' Annual General Meetings upon request to assist in the committee election process.

To comply with the recognition criteria, an established Residents Association must continue to:

- Work in partnership with North Lincolnshire Homes
- Operate in accordance with the North Lincolnshire Homes Volunteers Code of Conduct
- Adhere to its constitution – representing the areas identified
- Ensure that members of the association living within the boundary area are regularly informed and consulted on meetings, actions, consultations and other activities carried out by the association
- Elect officers and committee members at the AGM
- Keep financial records up to date and have these checked annually (include updates on any grant money received)
- Send copies of minutes to North Lincolnshire Homes
- Hold regular committee meetings to discuss the aims of the association and to agree agenda items for public meetings
- Keep North Lincolnshire Homes up to date with activities organised by the association
- Work on ideas and projects to enhance the quality of life for all residents in their areas

5. Benefits of North Lincolnshire Homes Recognition

Resident Associations that are recognised by North Lincolnshire Homes have automatic membership to Community Voice. This membership entitles the association to send two of its members to attend the meetings of Community Voice and to receive minutes and information from it.

Community Voice is the resident involvement tenant umbrella structure that is recognised as the main consultative forum that works in partnership with North Lincolnshire Homes.

6. Monitoring

North Lincolnshire Homes will provide support and assistance to all new and existing Resident Associations to enable them to comply with the agreed criteria.

Monitoring arrangements will be in place to check on the effectiveness of associations. This monitoring will be carried out by North Lincolnshire Homes and may include the surveying of all members represented by an association to establish whether they are being invited to attend public meetings and whether they feel the committee is consulting effectively with them.

North Lincolnshire Homes will, together with Community Voice, review this recognition criteria on an annual basis.

Copies of this policy are available from North Lincolnshire Homes upon request and can also be found on the North Lincolnshire Homes website (www.nlhomes.org.uk).

Other resident involvement documents available include:

- The Resident Involvement Handbook (Everything you need to know about Resident Involvement)
- Menu of Options
- Resident Involvement Strategy
- Resident Involvement Statement
- Volunteers' Expenses Policy and related leaflet