



TENANT ENGAGEMENT EXPERTS

tpas

Recognising Tenants and Residents Associations

A Practical Guide for Landlords





Welcome

Scope of this guide

This guide is intended for Tenants and Resident associations in general needs social housing (typically tenants or mixed communities).

It does not apply to:

- Leaseholder or shared ownership associations.
- Formally recognised tenant associations under leasehold legislation.

These groups have separate legal rights and recognition processes, and landlords should seek specialist leasehold advice when working with them. If you are looking for advice or support in this area, the Leasehold Advisory Service may be a good place to start.



Why getting recognition right matters

Associations are one of the most effective ways to understand what's really happening on estates and in communities.

Done well, they:

- Bring collective resident voice.
- Provide challenge and insight.
- Strengthen trust and transparency.
- Support regulatory expectations around engagement.

Done badly, they:

- Become controlled and lose credibility.
- Represent only a small number of voices.
- Disengage or stop altogether.

In most cases, the difference comes down to how recognition is set up.

The principle: Recognised, not controlled

Recognition should:

- Give the landlord confidence the Association is legitimate.
- Protect the Association's independence and ability to challenge.

If your criteria start to control behaviour or messaging, you've gone too far.

What good recognition looks like

A recognised Association should be:

Open and representative

- ✓ Bring collective resident voice.
- ✓ Provide challenge and insight.

Clear in purpose

- ✓ Focused on housing services, estates or community issues.
- ✓ Not driven by individual complaints or personal agendas.

Simply structured (but not over-engineered)

- ✓ Named contact(s) or a small committee to coordinate activity.
- ✓ A clear and agreed way of making decisions.
- ✓ Arrangements for keeping members informed.

The detail of how this works should be set out in the Associations constitution or terms of reference.

Transparent

- ✓ Shares information with its members.
- ✓ Acts in the interests of the wider resident group.



Able to challenge

- ✓ Can raise issues.
- ✓ Can question decisions.
- ✓ Can represent residents openly.

This is critical - challenge is part of the role, not something to manage or restrict.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Associations should:

- ✓ Be open and accessible to all residents.
- ✓ Actively encourage a diverse range of voices.
- ✓ Ensure meetings and activities are inclusive and welcoming.
- ✓ Treat all individuals fairly and with respect.
- ✓ Not tolerate discrimination or harassment.

Associations do not have to have formal equality policies, but they should demonstrate a clear commitment to inclusive practice through how they operate and, where possible, reflect this in their constitution.



Setting recognition

Keep it light-touch!

Your criteria should require Associations to have:

- A constitution or terms of reference.
- Open membership.
- A defined purpose.
- Named committee members or contacts.
- Commitment to respectful behaviour.

For most Associations, this will be enough.

Avoid turning this into a governance exercise - these are voluntary groups, not boards.



Financial expectations

Proportionate, not burdensome.

Where Associations receive or manage money:

Expect

- Basic records of income and spend.
- A named person responsible (e.g. treasurer).
- Simple reporting back to members.
- Funds used for resident benefit.

Good practice

- Bank account in the Association's name.
- Two signatories.

Only where funding is significant

- An independent check.



Formal audits are not needed for most Associations and can create unnecessary barriers.

The role of the landlord

Recognition is a two-way relationship.

Landlords should:

- Provide a clear contact point.
- Support communication and engagement.
- Offer guidance and training where needed.
- Enable access to opportunities and influence.

But not:

- Control agendas or messaging
- Restrict what groups can say publicly
- Require approval for decisions



Maintaining recognition

Recognition should be maintained where Associations:

- Continue to meet basic criteria.
- Operate in line with their purpose.
- Engage constructively.

If issues arise:

- Start with a conversation.
- Offer support to resolve.
- Use proportionate action only where necessary.

Any decision to withdraw recognition should be based on clear reasons and follow a fair and transparent process.





Common pitfalls to avoid

Overly restrictive codes of conduct

- Vague “disrepute” clauses.
- Limits on speaking publicly.

These damage trust and weaken groups.

Over-engineered governance

- Complex rules, AGMs, quorums.

These create barriers and reduce participation.

Heavy-handed sanctions

- Immediate withdrawal of recognition.
- Decisions made without an agreed process.

These undermine credibility and fairness.

Trying to control independence

- Treating Associations like extensions of the organisation.

Tenant and Resident associations are not part of your structure and shouldn't be.

A simple test

Ask yourself:

“If this group publicly disagrees with us and challenges our decisions, would we still recognise them?”

If the answer is no, your approach may need rethinking.

Final thought

Strong Associations don't come from control, they come from trust.

Get recognition right, and you'll have:

- Better local insight.
- More honest feedback.
- Stronger relationships and collaboration.

Get it wrong, and you'll have:

- More difficult conversations.
- Weaker challenge.
- And less meaningful engagement.



Recognition checklist for Landlords

Tenants and Residents Associations – Quick Self-Check

How to Use This Checklist

Use this as a reflection tool when recognising a new Association or reviewing an existing one. There is no pass mark. The aim is to identify strengths, gaps and areas to improve.

1. Basic Purpose and Scope

- ☐ Does the group represent tenants and/or residents in a defined area or community?
- ☐ Does the group have an ongoing purpose linked to housing, estates, neighbourhoods or community wellbeing?
- ☐ Is the group more than a response to one individual complaint or dispute?

2. Openness and Representation

- ☐ Is membership open to eligible residents in the area?
- ☐ Is the group seeking to hear from a range of residents, not just a small number of people?
- ☐ Are new members welcomed and able to get involved?

3. Structure and Organisation

- ☐ Does the group have a simple constitution or terms of reference?
- ☐ Are there named contacts or committee members?
- ☐ Is there a clear way decisions are made?
- ☐ Are members kept informed of meetings, decisions and activities?
- ☐ Are expectations proportionate for a voluntary resident group?



4. Independence and Voice

- ☐ Can the group raise concerns freely?
- ☐ Can the group challenge decisions respectfully?
- ☐ Does the landlord avoid controlling agendas, elections or messaging?
- ☐ Would recognition remain in place even where the group disagrees publicly with the landlord?

5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- ☐ Is the group open and accessible to all residents?
- ☐ Are meetings and communications inclusive and welcoming?
- ☐ Does the group promote respectful behaviour?
- ☐ Are discrimination, bullying and harassment clearly unacceptable?
- ☐ Is the group making reasonable efforts to hear underrepresented voices?

6. Financial Arrangements (if applicable)

- ☐ If the group receives funding, is it used for resident benefit?
- ☐ Are basic records of income and spending kept?
- ☐ Is a named person responsible for finances?
- ☐ Is spending reported back to members?
- ☐ Are financial expectations proportionate to the level of funding involved?

7. Landlord Support

- ☐ Is there a clear landlord contact for the group?
- ☐ Does the group know how to raise issues and access support?
- ☐ Is training or guidance available where appropriate?
- ☐ Does the group have access to relevant engagement opportunities?



8. Fair Recognition Process

- ☐ Are recognition criteria clear and publicly available?
 - ☐ Are decisions made consistently and fairly?
 - ☐ Are reasons for refusal or withdrawal explained?
 - ☐ Is there an opportunity to address concerns before recognition is removed?
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Final Reflection

- ☐ If this group publicly challenged us, would we still recognise them?
 - ☐ Are we enabling resident voice or trying to manage it?
 - ☐ Have we made recognition simple, fair and credible?
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If you answered “No” to several questions

You may wish to review whether your recognition approach is fair, proportionate and supportive of independent resident voice.

Other Tpas Resources

Check out other guides in the Tpas online resource hub:

- [Tpas Information Guide Developing a Terms of Reference](#)
- [Tpas Information guide Being a Representative](#)
- [Tpas Information Guide: Setting up a TRA](#)

- [Tpas Information Guide: Code of Conduct](#)
- [Tpas Information Guide: Developing and Writing a Constitution](#)
- [Tpas Information Guide: The Role of Committee Members](#)



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