

Being a Representative





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It is important that the voices of people who live in social housing do not get lost in formal organisational structures. The Social Housing Regulator sets out an expectation:

“...well-run and well-governed organisations need to have systems in place to listen to and engage with customers...”

Residents should be able to influence the activities and decisions that landlords make in a straightforward way.

Many landlords include resident representatives in their Resident Engagement and Involvement framework.

This information guide will cover the following:

- Definition of a representative
- What are the different types of representatives?
- Tips for being an effective representative
- Conflicts of interest as a representative and tips to navigate those tricky times
- Useful Information



Definition of a Representative

A resident representative is someone who usually has knowledge and expertise in their community or place where they live. That person will represent tenants within their scheme, or community, and will inform, influence, and scrutinise the day-to-day business decisions and policies that affect residents, advocating on their behalf.

Some examples of representatives in a social housing setting are:

- Scheme representatives
- Block/street champions
- Tenant and Residents Association (TRA) members
- Tenant Federation or strategic tenant body members
- Building Safety Champions

What Are the Different Types of Representatives?

In a democracy we simplify decision making by nominating people to represent our views and make decisions on our behalf. Usually, representatives are elected. In some cases, representatives may be selected for a specific period.

Delegated representative – representatives who are delegated the responsibility to act in the interests of the people who elected them. For e.g., Tenant Federation members who also sit on landlord's strategic committees.

Collective representative – when people from Tenants and Resident Associations or community groups take on responsibilities to consider the views of everyone covered by their constitution. Collective representatives should consider the views of their community, including from those people who do not attend meetings. They should find out what their community think when they are trying to find good resolutions to issues.

Tips for Being an Effective Representative

When you are a representative, you should:

Represent an agreed viewpoint

Seek the approval of the people that you represent. This means that community/resident groups should find out what the community thinks, discuss all the views gathered, then agree which of these views they should take forward.

Find out what the priorities are for the people you are representing. For example, if within a block of flats, the issues for most residents are anti-social behaviour, communal lift maintenance and poor

lighting in communal areas; then the focus should be on these issues.

Some ways of finding out what your community think include open meetings, drop-in sessions, short surveys. Many landlords will help by sharing the results of work they have already done, or by working with representatives to organise 'shared' research.

Feedback on decisions

Representatives must make sure that their communication to their community is two-way. Once they have taken forward the agreed views of their group, they must feedback the results.

Feedback should:

- Say what action, if any resulted from the representative's work
- Ask what future action should be taken.

Some ways of feeding back include:

- Holding open general meetings
- Producing and/or utilising landlord's newsletters
- Utilising the notice boards
- Working with local media (depending on what the issue is)





Conflicts of Interest as a Representative and Tips to Navigate those Tricky Times

Sometimes people's beliefs and interests, and how they operate in their personal lives, mean that they cannot reasonably represent the majority view.

There may also be instances where the representative, or a family member, could stand to gain financially from a decision. These are called 'conflicts of interest'.

Whenever a representative thinks there is any possibility of a conflict of interest, they should declare it. If they are a member of a Tenants and Residents Association, it should be set out in the constitution about what will happen in those instances.

See Tpas guide to developing and writing a constitution.

Useful information

Tpas offers a range of training courses for you to be effective in your role and in the community you live. For more details, visit our website www.tpas.org.uk.

If you have any questions regarding this document or if we can help in any other way, call us on **0161 868 3500** or email info@tpas.org.uk