

**RECOGNITION CRITERIA FOR TENANTS
ASSOCIATIONS INVOLVED IN THE
DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

LEVEL 1

In achieving Best Value in housing, the council must be accountable to both its tenants and its funding body – central Government. To discharge its duty effectively to both, the council must ensure that any resident association/groups to which it grants recognition, funding and other support fulfils certain basic criteria. The criteria are based on best practice in Tenant Participation and form part of the Core standard “Standards for Tenant Groups” in the London Borough of Enfield Borough-Wide Tenant Participation Compact. The council has a responsibility to ensure that a recognised group is acceptable to an agreed percentage of tenants in the area it claims to represent and that it is truly representative and democratically run.

These recognition criteria specifically apply to resident associations on mixed-tenure estates across the London Borough of Enfield that wish to get involved at Level 1 decision-making in services provided by the housing group.

Council’s responsibilities to recognised tenants associations

All tenants associations formally recognised by the London Borough of Enfield will have an opportunity to be involved at Level 1 and can expect the following resources through the Tenant Involvement Unit:

- a dedicated Tenant Involvement Officer to provide advice, information and support
- advice and assistance to hold public meetings
- booking and payment of meeting rooms and halls
- training and information for tenant representatives
- an annual grant
- items of stationery to help administer their organisations (annual stationary pack)
- travel to and from all relevant events
- carer costs for representatives to attend all relevant events

- printing costs of newsletters and other promotional literature
- assistance with word processing and photocopying
- access to Resource Centres at 4 local libraries

The above is not an exhaustive list; individual associations can negotiate levels of support best suited to their needs and local circumstances. Recognised tenants associations can also:

- participate in consultative arrangements set up by Enfield Housing Services
- request and expect officer attendance from the Housing Group at their meetings provided an agenda and adequate notice is given
- Expect feedback from officers on agenda items taken away for action within agreed time-scales.

Enfield's criteria for the recognition of tenants associations

The recognition criteria serve a dual purpose. They set out the relationship, rights and responsibilities of both parties – the council and tenants associations. In Enfield, the criteria serve as a binding agreement between the two parties and each must conform to them and take responsibility for its part in them. In so doing, each party will be accountable to the other.

The primary focus of this partnership is on housing and estate management issues. However, tenants associations can and will be encouraged to extend their involvement to other broader local issues of interest and concern according to their local circumstances.

To qualify for recognition by the council, a tenants association must comply with the following criteria:

- set up the association at a public meeting, to which all residents in the defined area are formally invited. Every resident over the age of 16 living in the defined area of the group has a right to vote at the meeting.
- democratically elect a committee at either:
 - a) a public inaugural meeting
 - b) a public inaugural meeting in conjunction with a postal ballot of all residents living in the defined area

- at each annual general meeting a committee should be elected. This meeting and the subsequent election can be facilitated by the Tenant Involvement Unit or the Federation of Enfield Community Associations on request.
- adopt the council's model constitution **or an approved variation** (subject to approval of the Tenant Participation Working Party) at a public meeting, which:
 - clearly defines the area which the association will represent
 - states the association's aims and objectives
 - has a clear equal opportunities statement or policy
 - states the minimum number of general meetings it will hold each year
 - States clearly the number of committee meetings it will hold each year
 - states when it will hold its annual general meeting
 - makes provision to account for all its financial transactions

Furthermore, mechanisms have been put in place to ensure tenants associations can demonstrate the following:

- 1) At least 20% of Council tenants of the London Borough of Enfield in the defined area should give an annual mandate to the group to represent them. This mandate should be obtained through a postal or door to door survey each year. A signature should be obtained from each tenant wishing to be represented by the group. If the number of tenants in the defined area exceeds 250 the association can make representation to the Tenant Participation Working Party for agreement to undertake an opt out Postal Survey
- 2) They are working towards achieving agreed targets of staged increases in the level of support from their community, working towards an ideal target level of support from Council tenants of 31%.
- 3) Groups unable to demonstrate annual improvements in support levels will still be recognised by the council if they can produce evidence of their work towards improvement over the year.
- 4) The make-up of the executive committee consists of council tenants and that of the general committee reflects the ratio of council tenants to other residents in the defined area. A maximum of up to 3 freeholders may hold positions on the committee without voting rights on housing specific issues.

- 5) They are operating as completely non-political organisations.
- 6) Only one person per household holds an executive post on the committee. Individuals should be encouraged not to hold executive committee positions beyond four years if others are interested in gaining experience in a post and are supported by the community.
- 7) Copies of annual accounts (relating to the grant funding from the council), annual reports, and attendance lists of annual general meetings and general meetings are sent annually to the Tenant Involvement Unit .
- 8) Committee meetings are being regularly held and agendas and attendance lists of meetings are sent to the Tenant Involvement Unit .
- 9) Minutes of those meetings attended by officers of the Housing Group are sent to the Tenant Involvement Unit .
- 10) Minutes of all committee and general meetings are sent to all committee members and are accessible to any member of the association who wishes to see them.
- 11) They are acting in accordance with their equal opportunity statement or policy and are making every effort to involve and represent all sections of their community.
- 12) The general members of associations living within the defined area are regularly informed and consulted through newsletters, informal/formal meetings, and other relevant means. Copies of any papers to be made available to the Tenant Involvement Unit.
- 13) Representatives are reporting their members' views and needs to Enfield Housing Services through regular meetings, estate inspections, and other relevant means. If a committee member is acting on behalf of an individual resident on a personal matter, they should have the residents written permission to do so.

Tenants associations will be required to register with the Tenant Involvement Unit and apply for recognition in April of each year. A certificate of recognition will be awarded to all groups that meet the criteria.

The Tenant Involvement Unit will provide support and assistance to all new and existing tenants associations, to enable them to comply with the criteria.