

Resident Association Guide

A Guide to Setting Up an Accredited Resident Association

This guide has been designed to provide ideas and helpful guidance to St Albans City and District Council's tenants and leaseholders on setting up a Resident Association in their area.

Being part of a Resident Association gives people the opportunity to discuss important local issues and have a say in council decisions that affect services in their area. When residents work together, they can create positive change in their community. Resident Associations can also organise events and activities that help build a stronger sense of community.

The Resident Engagement Team can help support you while your group is getting started and will continue to assist as your group becomes established, helping you build links within the Housing Service and across the council.

What is a Resident Association?

A Resident Association (RA) is a voluntary group of people who live in a neighbourhood and decide to represent and support their local community. Resident Associations are independent of the council, but the council has a role to play in supporting groups and ensuring accredited RAs follow a transparent governance process.

Residents can come together and form a Resident Association to address specific priorities in their neighbourhood or to build a stronger sense of community in the area. Resident Associations also play a vital role in consulting with local communities when needed.

Why Start a Resident Association?

- To campaign for a positive change or to protect something important in your community (e.g. improvements to repairs services, play areas, green spaces, etc.).
- To bring together different resident views, giving your community a shared voice and working closely with the Housing Service to improve neighbourhood services.
- To organise local events, raise funds, and build a stronger sense of community (e.g. a street party, fitness sessions, or clean-up days).

- To keep residents informed about what is happening in your neighbourhood.

Where Do I Start?

Step 1: Check for an Existing RA

- Check that there is not already an RA covering any part of the neighbourhood you wish to represent.
- You can find out about existing resident groups in St Albans by contacting the Resident Engagement Team at residentengagement@stalbands.gov.uk.

Step 2: Talk to Your Neighbours

- Speak with people in your area, whether on doorsteps, in communal areas, at schools, community centres, or local shops.

You should find out:

- Whether an RA could make a difference in your area.
- If the concerns of others align with yours.
- What homes and areas the RA should cover.
- Whether people would be willing to join and help run the group.

Try to build a group that reflects the diversity of your community to ensure inclusivity. You will need at least six committed individuals willing to help run the RA and attend regular meetings.

Step 3: Contact the Resident Engagement Team

- Get in touch with us to learn more about getting accredited as an RA.
- We offer free training to develop key skills such as chairing meetings, fundraising, financial management, and minute-taking.
- We can assist with leaflets, letters, email templates, community data, translations, interpreters, and arranging a venue for your first meeting.
- We will inform you of the criteria required for accreditation, including demonstrating efforts to reach all sections of the community.

Step 4: Arrange an Initial Meeting

- Invite your Housing Officer.
- The Resident Engagement Team can provide guidance on meeting locations and may assist with venue costs if no free community space is available.
- Consider accessibility needs and cultural factors when planning.

Step 5: Promote the Meeting

- The Resident Engagement Team can provide templates for letters, leaflets, or posters to inform residents.
- Distribute materials via letterboxes, noticeboards, or social media.
- Give people plenty of notice and send reminders to maximise attendance.

Step 6: Hold the First Meeting

- Your Housing Officer and Resident Engagement Officer can attend and help structure the agenda.
- Use the meeting to outline the purpose of the RA and answer questions.
- Appoint a temporary Chair to facilitate discussions.

If enough interest is shown, you can proceed with formalising your RA by organising a launch Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Step 7: Preparing for the Launch AGM

- Choose a name for your group.
- Review and adopt a constitution with guidance from the Resident Engagement Team.
- Create a membership list and a data protection policy.
- Confirm the area your RA will represent.
- Set a date, book a venue, and advertise the meeting.
- Arrange a facilitator (Resident Engagement Team members can oversee elections if required).

Step 8: At the Launch AGM

- Register new members.
- Vote to adopt the constitution.
- Elect a committee, including at minimum a Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer.
- Set the frequency of meetings and the date for the next AGM.
- Begin collecting ideas for future projects and initiatives.

Step 9: Setting Up a Bank Account and Grant Application

- Open a bank account in the RA's name with at least two signatories from the elected committee.
- Contact the Resident Engagement Team to apply for a start-up grant.

Committee Members and Their Roles

- **Chair:** Provides leadership, chairs meetings, ensures RA follows its objectives, and represents the group at external meetings.
- **Secretary:** Handles administration, meeting agendas, minutes, and official communication.
- **Treasurer:** Manages finances, ensures transparent handling of funds, and presents accounts annually.

Resident Association Grant

For your RA to be grant-funded, the Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and most committee members must be tenants or leaseholders of St Albans City and District Council. The Resident Engagement Team provides a grant of £100 for accredited RAs.

Training and Support

Accredited RA members can attend free training sessions on governance, finance, and other relevant skills. Additional support is available from the Resident Engagement Team.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if I don't want to start an RA but still want to be involved?

If you decide starting an RA is not for you but would still like to be involved in shaping the council's housing services, and you are a tenant or leaseholder, the Resident Engagement Team would love to hear from you.

(FAQs such as membership limits, constitutions, quorums, bank accounts, and AGMs remain the same as outlined in the previous version, with references updated to St Albans City and District Council.)

For further information, contact the Resident Engagement Team at residentengagement@stalbans.gov.uk or call 01727 866100 to request a call back from a team member.