

Starting a Tenants' and Residents' Organisation

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What is a Tenants' and Residents' Organisation?

A Tenants' and Residents' Organisation is a group of people who live in the same area that get together to talk about Housing and Community issues that effect everyone. With the help of Falkirk Council they try to find a solution to these issues. They are a voice for you community on issues such as:

- Repairs
- Information about Antisocial Behaviour
- Rubbish collection
- Parking and untidy estates

An Organisation can represent a block of flats, several streets or even a larger chosen area.

They can try to make changes in their community by:

- Meeting with Local Councillor
- Talking to the Neighbourhood Office staff
- Attending Tenant's and residents' Forum

They can also organise social events to try and increase community spirit such as:

- Outings
- Coffee mornings and bingo nights
- Fun runs and sponsored events (cycling, swimming, running)
- Raffles
- Keep fit classes

**Proceeds from raffles and sponsored events should be used to fund future events.*

Anyone can start up a group as long as they are representing Council tenants on housing issues. You could be a council tenants, private tenants or owners and occupiers.

Registration is free and Falkirk Council will help you set up your Organisation. You will also get a start up grant of £300 to help with the costs of running a group.

How do you start a Tenants' and Residents' Organisation?

To become a registered Tenants' and Residents' Organisation you need to do the following steps (each point below is fully explained in this publication):

1. Hold a Public Meeting to discuss starting a Tenants' and Registered Organisation, get volunteers and discuss the area you want to represent.
2. Hold a group meeting to choose a committee and form a constitution.
3. Hold a second Public Meeting to agree on the committee and constitution.
4. Complete registration form.
5. If accepted get funding for £300 and start your group!

How to arrange a public meeting

Before you try to arrange a Public Meeting you should meet with your local Neighbourhood Officer who will offer help and advice. They can help you with the:

Venue - finding a suitable venue such as Falkirk Council owned buildings, Community Centres.

Time and Date - selecting a date to fit it around peoples' working hours and those that have children

Invites - you need to invite everyone in your chosen area including Local Councillors and if you are going to have any guest speakers

Advertising - to make it easy for people to find out about your meeting

Agenda - outlining what will be discussed at the meeting

Chairperson – finding the best person to lead the meeting

Minute taker – finding the best person to take the minutes to record what happens at the meeting

What are the Agenda and Minutes?

The Agenda

This is a list of things to discuss at meetings. If followed it will help the meeting to run smoothly.

The agenda should be sent to everyone before the meeting by the groups secretary so that people can come to the meeting prepared.

Any member of the group can ask for an item to be added to the agenda. The agenda would typically include:

- Welcome and Introduction
- Apologies of the members that can't make it
- Approval of previous minutes and matters arising from these minutes
- Discuss any correspondence
- Items on the Agenda
- Any other business to discuss that is not on the Agenda
- Treasurers report
- Date of next meeting

The Minutes

Minutes are a note of what was discussed at the meeting. They should contain the following information:

- Date, time and place of meeting
- Names of those were present and who gave their apologies
- A short summary of the items on the agenda and what was discuss about them
- An action column on the right hand to mark if an item is to be continued and who is responsible for dealing with this and the timeframe to do it in
- A short summary of any other business that was discussed that was not listed on the agenda
- The minutes should finish with the date, time and place of the next meeting

General Meetings and the AGM

You organisation will want to hold meetings to talk about issues you are interested in. They do not need to be public meetings and only the people in your organisation need to be invited.

You will also need to hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) close to the end of your registration. The purpose of an AGM is to decide if you are continuing the Organisation the following year and if so to elect the new committee. Current committee members may choose to stand down or to be elected back onto the Committee.

What is a Committee?

Your group needs to elect people to be responsible for certain tasks. The committee must consist of Office Bearers such as a:

Chairperson - who acts as spokesperson for the group, keeps control of the meeting, gives everyone a chance to speak and be heard, makes sure everyone understands the decisions being taken, summarises the items on the agenda and outlines actions that have been agreed

Secretary - who will book the venue for meetings, prepares the agenda, advertises meetings, takes the minutes and send them out to everyone, receives and files all correspondence and keeps members informed about up and coming events

Treasurer - who needs to open a bank account in the name of the group, receives funds given and raised by the organisation, reimburses members for purchases, keep accounts up to date, provides update on financial position at every meeting, consult with members on how money is spent and prepares annual statement for the Annual General Meeting and be involved in the annual audit. The Treasurer should keep receipts from all purchases to keep the accounts in good order.

Committee Members - not everyone needs to take on a role and they are called General Committee Members. They will contribute to discussion, accept majority decisions, put forward ideas, supports the Chairperson, votes on issues and help distribute materials.

What is a Constitution?

A constitution is a written set of rules that states how the Tenants' and Residents' Organisation is run. It should include:

1. The name of the Organisation and the area it has chosen to cover
2. The Organisations aims and objectives
3. An equal opportunities statement – to ensure fairness
4. How often the Organisation will meet
5. The minimum number of people who can make decisions (a quorum for meetings)
6. How the accounts are checked
7. What happens if the Organisation disbands

How to apply for registration?

After your second public meeting and once everyone in your area agrees on your Constitution and Committee you can apply for funding with Falkirk Council. You also have to sign and agree to uphold the Partnership agreement (see fuller explanation within this publication).

You can apply by completing the form at the end of this leaflet or by getting an electronic copy on our website at www.falkirk.gov.uk/inspectortenant

Registration is done a minimum of every three years. We will advise when you need to apply again and how to do this.

What is the Partnership agreement?

The agreement is a document which details how your Housing Service will communicate with your Organisation, what services you can expect from us, what we expect from your Organisation and what arrangements we have agreed with you to carry out an annual review of the Organisation.

How soon can you get your money and what is it for?

Your local Housing Office will help your Organisation to get up and running with a start up grant of £300.00. Funds will be received shortly after registration.

If you decided to register again in a year's time you can get the same amount of money to help you continue your group.

You can use the funds to pay for the costs of holding meetings such as venues, pens and paper, refreshment, travel etc. It can also pay for social events as mentioned above.

All members of the Organisation should have an equal say on how the funds should be spent.

Your spending will be audited at the end of the year. You will need to have your accounts audited by someone independent from your group, such as a voluntary organisation or another group. Your Housing office will be able to assist you with this if necessary.

Can we get any more money?

The Organisation can apply to the Council and external agents for funding to help organise larger social events or to make improvements to your community such as our Make a Difference Scheme. Falkirk Council has a dedicated Funding Unit which will assist you with your application. Call 01324 506070 for further information.

Example of successful funding of a Tenants' and Residents' Organisations:

Bo'ness Tenants and Residents Organisation received a £4,780 grant from 'Make a Difference' working alongside the Local Housing Office and with Partners to work together to decorate the common room at an old persons housing complex. The project was led by the group, working with tenants and has made a huge difference to the residents.

What training can you get?

We offer training free of charge to help you run your Organisation:

- Committee skills
- Book keeping
- Minute taking
- Computer skills

Further help and advice?

Your local Housing Office or Community Engagement Team can offer advice and information to help you set up and maintain your Organisation. They can also provide:

- free photocopying
- help with leaflets, newsletters and general publicity
- links with other successful organisations

Housing Services Offices

Access to Housing Team

Callendar Square
Falkirk FK1 1UJ
Freephone: 0800 587 4440
Tel: 01324 503600
E-mail: ath@falkirk.gov.uk

Advice and Support Hub

5 York Lane,
Grangemouth FK3 8BD
Tel: 01324 504550
E-mail: housing.grangemouth@falkirk.gov.uk

Camelon One Stop Shop

256 Main Street
Camelon, Falkirk FK1 4DY
Tel: 01324 503640
E-mail:
housing.camelon@falkirk.gov.uk

Dawson Centre

David's Loan, Falkirk FK2 7RG
Tel: 01324 501450
E-mail: housing.dawson@falkirk.gov.uk

Denny One Stop Shop

Carronbank House
Carronbank Crescent,
Denny FK6 6GA
Tel: 01324 504050
E-mail: housing.denny@falkirk.gov.uk

Falkirk One Stop Shop

Callendar Square,
Falkirk FK1 1UJ
Tel: 01324 506868
E-mail: housing.falkirk@falkirk.gov.uk

Stenhousemuir One Stop Shop

398 Main Street
Stenhousemuir FK5 3JR
Tel: 01324 503340
E-mail:
housing.stenhousemuir@falkirk.gov.uk

Community Engagement Team

Tel: 01324 590796
E-mail: inspectortenant@falkirk.gov.uk

Application Form for Registered Tenants' and Residents' Organisation

1. Name of Organisation

2. Area covered by your Organisation

3. Main contact name (Chairperson)

Address

Telephone

E-mail

4. Second contact name (Secretary)

Name

Address

Telephone

Email

5. Have you attached a copy of your Organisation Constitution?

YES NO

Please send the completed form to:

**Tenant Participation Team The Forum
Callendar Business Park Falkirk
FK1 1XR**

or email the form to: tenant.participation@falkirk.gov.uk

Further Information and Assistance

If you have any queries or need help to fill in this form please contact your local Housing Office/One Stop Shop.

Agreement

On behalf of the organisation, I have read the guidance notes in this booklet "Starting a Tenants' and Residents' Organisation" and have the Committee's agreement to be bound by the criteria laid down in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. I understand that the contact details (Section 3 of this form) will be published in the Register and may be viewed by the public.

Signed on behalf of the Organisation:

Committee position held:

Date:

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY:

	Criteria Met	Comments
1. Constitution	YES / NO	_____
2. Committee	YES / NO	_____
3. Area of Operation	YES / NO	_____
4. Membership Policy	YES / NO	_____
5. Accounting	YES / NO	_____
6. Consultation and Representation	YES / NO	_____
APPROVAL GRANTED	YES / NO	

Signed:

Designation:

Date:

Have your say on how your Housing Service is run, or how it could be improved. To find out more, contact Inspector Tenant on 01324 590796, email inspector.tenant@falkirk.gov.uk or visit us at www.falkirk.gov.uk/inspectortenant for more information.

If you would like this information in another language, Braille, large print or audio tape please contact one of our Neighbourhood Offices or One Stop Shops.



Falkirk Council

www.falkirk.gov.uk/inspectortenant

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