
Guide to setting up a resident group

This guide is for SYHA tenants and leaseholders who are thinking of setting up a group to do something that benefits their neighbourhood and the people living in it.

Setting up a group can involve some hard work but it is well worth the effort. This guide talks you through how you go about setting one up and what support and advice is available to you.

The guide is colour coded so you can easily jump from section to section. If after reading it you want any further help, advice or support please get in touch with us.

South Yorkshire Housing Association

43 – 47 Wellington Street
Sheffield
S1 4HF

Telephone: 0114 2900 200

Email: enquiries@syha.co.uk

Text: SYHA to 63333



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1. What you need to consider before setting up a group

1.1 Why do you want to set up a group?

Being clear about why you want to set up a group will help you decide which type of group to set up.

1.2 Do you need to set up a group?

If it is because of issues in your neighbourhood or with SYHA it might be that you can have a chat with us and we can then work with you to resolve your issues without the need to set up a group.

1.3 Is there already a group in your area?

If you are unsure contact us or your local Council. If there is, we suggest rather than setting up a new group, you get in touch with the group and work with them to achieve your aims.

1.4 What type of group do you want to set up?

There are different kinds of residents groups but most groups fall in to one of the following three types.

Type of group	Their purpose	How they run
A Tenants' and Residents' Association (TARA)	They take up issues of community concern and work with their landlord and other agencies to resolve them	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They are run in a formal way and hold an annual general meeting have aims, a set of rules often called a constitution a bank account and keep accounts• They need people who will come forward and hold committee positions• They can usually apply for funding from different sources
An action, improvement or project group	They usually form to work on a specific issue, for example a campaign to get traffic calming measures put in place or doing something with and unused green space	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• They are less formal than a TARA and don't usually have a constitution, bank account etc• They need a small group of committed residents that will plan and organise meetings• They should have a clear aim• They are not likely to be able to apply for funding from different sources but SYHA

		<p>may help with the running costs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the group achieves their aims they usually disbands or can often turn in to another type of group such as a social or activity group
Social or activity group	Residents to get together on a social basis or to organise activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are usually informal • They need a group of committed residents to plan and organise activities • They may not be able to apply for funding from different sources but they can apply to SYHA for a community grant to help fund activities

1.5 What do other people in your neighbourhood think?

If you are still reading the guide you obviously think it is a good idea to set up a group, but you now need to know if other people in your area also think it's a good idea. A group will only succeed if it has the support of people who live in the area.

If you haven't already done so have a chat to your neighbours and other people in the area and see if they think it is a good idea. From our experience we think that you need at least six people who will commit to coming along to a first meeting about setting up a group.

If you are now clear on the type of group you want to set up, there isn't already a group in your area and other people think it is a good idea, the rest of the guide talks you through the practicalities of setting up a group.

If at this point you haven't yet been in touch with SYHA and let us know what you are planning, now is the time to do it. We can talk to you about what support we can offer you to get up and running.

2. The first steps to setting up any type of resident group

There isn't a right or wrong way to do it, but if you are thinking of setting up any type of group we would suggest the first thing you do is to plan a meeting.

2.1 Holding your first meeting

Get together the people who are interested in setting up a group to plan the first meeting. The planning meeting can be in someone's home. Use the [Meetings Guidance at section 9](#) to help you plan the meeting as well as the information below.

Plan to hold your first meeting at the time that the maximum number of people can come along. For your first meeting you could consider holding one in the daytime and one in the evening then you can find out what suits the majority of people.

We recommend the person you have agreed will chair the meetings hosts it as described below.

Welcome and introductions

Thank everyone for attending and introduce any Officers, Councillors and other agencies that are at the meeting.

Why you think a group is needed

Here you can update everyone on how you have got to this point. Explain who made the first contact and why they felt it was right to move towards setting up a group.

Discuss the purpose of the group

This is where the reasons and issues that have prompted setting up a group can be discussed to see how everyone else feels. It is also a good time to find out if there are any other issues the group could be set up to look at.

The next steps

If there is support at the meeting for a group agree what type of group you are going to set up, a name for the group, a date for your next meeting and let everyone at the meeting know what you will do next. There is more information about next steps below.

2.2 What happens if no-one is interested?

Don't worry, it happens all the time. If there is no support for setting up the type of group you think is needed, it may be that you could consider setting up one of the other types of groups mentioned in this guide or get in touch with us to talk to us about what other ways you can get involved.

2.3 Next steps to setting up a group

What you need to do next depends on the type of group you are setting up.

Go to **section 3** if you think you want to set up an action, improvement or project group

Go to **section 4** if you think you want to set up a social or activity group

Go to **section 5** if you think you want to set up a tenant and residents association.

3. How to set up an action, improvement or project group

3.1 Put together a group remit

It is important for informal groups to have a clear purpose and some sort of structure for how the group operates. We recommend that as a group you work on putting together some sort of remit for your group. It doesn't matter what you decided to call it but for the purpose of talking about it here we will refer to it as a remit.

Working through putting a remit together also means everyone is clear on what the group is working towards and how you intend to do it. They are also really useful if new people get involved so you can easily communicate what the group is about.

3.2 Arrange a second meeting

Use the **Meetings Guidance at section 9** to help you arrange your second meeting and at this meeting write and agree your remit. Below are some suggestions for what you could include in the remit:

- The name of the group
- What the group has come together to achieve - your aims
- Who else needs to be involved to help you work towards your aims
- How often and where you will meet
- What resources you need to run the group and how you are going to get them. See **section 7** for more information about **support available from SYHA and getting resources**
- Who will do what
- How you will advertise and invite people to come along to your meetings
- How you will involve and communicate with people that live in the area but don't come to the meetings
- Any resources you need
- What will happen when you have achieved what the group was set up to do

3.3 Running the group

Once you have agreed the group remit work to it until you have achieved your aims. Keep referring to the **Meetings guidance at section 9** to help you plan and run your **meetings and the information on Support** from SYHA and getting resources at **section 7** to help you get resources.

You may want to skip section 4 and 5 and go to section 6 if you are confident that it is an action, project or improvement group you want to set up.

4. How to set up a social or activity group

4.1 Put together a group remit

We recommend that you work on putting together some sort of remit for your social or activity group. It doesn't matter what you decided to call it but for the purpose of talking about it here we will refer to it as a remit.

A social or activity group will benefit from having a remit because it sets out the purpose of the group and it will help to keep you on track. It will also be useful if new people get involved so you can easily communicate what the group is about.

4.2 Arrange a second meeting

Use the [Meetings Guidance at section 9](#) to help you arrange your second meeting at this meeting write and agree your remit. Below are suggestions for what you could include in the remit:

- The name of the group
- The type of social activities you are planning to provide
- Who you are aiming them at
- How you will consult with people in the area you represent and find out what type of social activities they want and when and how they want them
- How often you will run activities and where (if appropriate)
- Who else needs to be involved to help you organise your activities
- What resources you need to run the group and how you are going to get them. See [section 7](#) for more information about **support available from SYHA and getting resources**
- If there is a cost to the activities you run how money will be handled. See [5.4](#) for more information about setting up a bank account and keeping accounts
- If you need public liability insurance how you will fund it for any trips, outings or events you organise
- Who will do what
- How you will advertise and invite people to come along to your activities

Once you have agreed the group remit use it to give some structure to the group.

4.3 Running the group

You should work to the remit and use it to give the group some structure.

Keep referring to the **Meetings guidance at section 9** to help you plan and run your meetings and the **Support from SYHA and getting resources section 7** to help you get resources. Regularly review that you are providing activities that are reaching the people they are aiming to reach.

You may want to skip section 5 and go to section 6 if you are confident that you it is a social group you want to set up.

5. How to set up a Tenants and Residents Association

There are a number of things a formal group like a TARA must do if they want to be recognised respected and funded by other organisations.

5.1 A TARA must have a constitution

Every TARA needs a constitution, it sounds complicated but it doesn't have to be. A constitution sets out why the group exists and how it conducts its business.

Groups that want to be formally recognised by SYHA need a constitution to show that they are working in an open, accountable and democratic way. Your constitution should explain:

- The name of the group
- Your aims
- How you conduct your business
- Who can be a member
- What area your group covers
- How many committee members there are
- What will happen if the group folds

It can be hard to write your constitution at a meeting so we suggest at your first meeting talked about in this guide at section 2, you task a small group to put together a draft constitution to bring back to the rest of the group for further discussion.

The **model constitution at section 10** may help you do this. There are many model constitutions about, a quick search on the Internet will give you a good selection and you could also use these to help you put yours together. You will also find a **constitution checklist at section 10** that you can use to check you have included everything you need to for SYHA to recognise it.

5.2 A TARA must have an elected committee

A well run and organised committee will help your group achieve all that you set out to achieve. Successful committees:

- Work together and support each other
- Listen to each other
- Do what they say they will
- Abide by decisions made
- Share the workload

-
- Try and be representative of their membership as far as possible
 - Enjoy themselves

Your committee should be elected by your members at an open meeting so any person living in the area you represent can vote.

When you are a new group you can choose to elect your committee at your first meeting if there is enough interest. If you want to do this make sure you build it in to the first meeting talked about at section 2 in this guide.

5.2.1 Roles and responsibilities of your committee

There are three main committee positions that every group needs:

Chair - A good chair is essential for a successful meeting. The role of the chair includes:

- Planning the meetings
- Work with the Secretary to make sure that all of the information and paperwork needed is brought to meetings
- Making sure meetings started on time and they keep on track
- Introducing and summarising the purpose of the meeting
- Introducing each agenda item giving any necessary background information
- Summarise the points made in discussions and bring about decision making
- Politely stopping conversations that start up aside of the main discussion
- Politely keeping people to the point and stop them talking too long and intervening if one person is dominating the meeting
- Making sure that everyone has the chance to be heard
- Not allowing people to make personal criticisms

Secretary - Anyone who has some organisational skills can be a successful secretary. The role of the secretary includes organising for the following to be done:

- Sorting out the paperwork
- Receiving mail on behalf of the group
- Writing letters and emails from the group and sending them
- Helping the Chair set up the meetings
- Publicising the meetings
- Making meeting notes that record any decisions made and actions agreed
- Keeping and distributing copies of the meeting notes

There is more information about taking notes in the [Meetings Guidance at section 9](#).

Treasurer - Looking after the money is easy if the treasurer is organised. They need to:

- Pay money into, and take money out of the bank

-
- Pay bills on behalf of the group
 - Set up and run a book keeping system, that shows the money that the group has taken in and where the group has spent any money.
 - Report on a regular basis about the financial position of the group

5.2.2 Other committee positions and general committee members

As well as a chair, secretary and treasurer you can decide to have other roles for example you could choose to have a Vice-Chair, Publicity Officer or Social Secretary if doing so will help you achieve your aims.

Your general committee members can make or break your group. If you rely too much on the main committee officers, you may find it difficult to keep going in the long term. Their role is to:

- Attend meetings and participate in decisions
- Support the chair, secretary and treasurer in their work
- Take on a specific task for example publicity and fundraising

5.3 A TARA must set up a bank account and keep accounts

You will need a bank or building society account in the name of the group. Some banks and building societies have special accounts for small community groups.

When you set up your account there must be three signatories on the account and usually any two of the three signatories are able to sign cheques. Cheque signatories must not be related or live in the same household. Doing this avoids any accusations of dodgy dealings.

We recommend that you:

- Use your chequebook rather than cash where ever possible
- Do not sign blank cheques
- Keep all invoices, receipts, cheque stubs for at least 2 years
- Have a maximum petty cash float of £50

Recording all receipts and payments in a cash book is a simple way of keeping on top of your accounts day to day. You will find a template for a **simple cash book at 5.4**. We suggest you keep two cash books, one for transactions through your bank account and one for petty cash.

Some groups give updates at each committee meeting on finances. You don't have to do this but you must present your annual accounts at your annual general meeting for approval by your members.

5.5 A TARA has regular meetings and hold an annual general meeting (AGM)

There are a couple of different types of meetings groups hold.

- General or open meetings – all members are invited
- Committee meetings – only committee members are invited
- Annual general meeting (also known as an AGM) – all members are invited

As the guide is about setting up your group we won't say too much about your AGM because this usually takes place approximately 1 year after the group has set up.

What it is probably worth knowing at this stage though is the AGM is an important meeting. At it you can ask for approval to make changes to your constitution, the current committee steps down and you elect a new committee and you present your annual accounts for approval.

5.6 The second meeting

Now you know what is involved in setting up a TARA you need to arrange a second meeting, to get on with sorting some of them out. Use the [Meetings Guidance at section 9](#) to help you do this.

Our suggestions for what you should do at your second meeting are:

Agree the constitution

If at your first meeting you tasked a small group to go away and come up with a draft constitution this is when you look at the draft and agree any changes. A majority show of hands can be enough to adopt it as the constitution of the group. If you haven't already tasked a small group to come up with it agree how you are going to do your draft now now.

Define your area

You might want to use a map to help you decide the area your group will cover. Some groups find this easy to do because there is a natural boundary to their neighbourhood. For other groups it might not be easy to decide how far to spread. We suggest that you don't try and cover too large an area and there is no point inviting people to join your group if they don't feel part of your neighbourhood.

We recommend that you cover all homes in your area regardless of who is the owner of the home. Most groups we work with are a mixture of tenants from a variety of landlords and owner occupiers.

Elect your committee

There are different ways you can elect your committee but as it is the first time you will have done it we suggest that you take nominations from the room and hold a vote by

asking people to show their hands. There is more information about the committee roles you need to elect at 5.3.

Set up your bank account

Task the treasurer to set up your bank account.

Once you have done these things your group is now set up and the hard work starts! Go to section 6 for advice on how to strengthen your group.

6. Onwards and upwards – strengthening your group

6.1 Keeping momentum going

After the initial excitement of setting up, you may find that some people will drift away. You need to keep things fresh by moving forwards on the aims in your constitution or doing what you have said you will do in your remit.

Meetings are a focal point of your group but remember that things should be happening in between meetings to work towards achieving your aims. Make sure you are clear at your meetings about what you expect from people before the next meeting.

6.2 Target setting and action plans

Any type of group should consider agreeing an action plan to show how you are going to achieve your aims.

Setting small targets that will lead on to achieving your aims, will make people feel that things are happening, and will keep them interested. If you set big targets that will take more than 12 months to achieve, you may find that some members will lose interest.

6.3 Keeping things friendly

One of the other reasons why people walk away from being part of a group is personality clashes. Group members don't have to be the best of friends but for the benefit of the group, people have to work together otherwise you will find it almost impossible to move on and get anything done.

All decisions must be talked through and the majority of the members must agree. If you allow one or two people to dominate, other members may feel that it is a 'closed shop' and walk away.

6.4 Communicating with your members

Keep everyone in the area your group covers informed about what you are up to on a regular basis. If you do this you may find that some people decided to join in at a later date or are willing to lend a hand outside of your meetings.

You should produce regular newsletters and flyers. SYHA can help you to do your first few to help you get in the swing of things.

6.5 Communicating with other SYHA customers

We are always keen to publish articles in our Keeping in Touch newsletter about what people who live in our neighbourhoods are up to. If you are just starting up we can put together an article about the group and encourage SYHA people living in your neighbourhood to get involved as well as telling other SYHA customers about the hard work you are doing.

Once you are up and running let us know about any activities you are doing or something you have achieved and we will also put these in the newsletter.

6.6 Embracing diversity

Your group must try to break down any barriers and create an environment where all members of your neighbourhood can become involved. For example people with disabilities and those that have a different faith, sexuality or ethnic background can sometimes feel excluded. It's important that your group works to make sure that all members are made welcome.

7. Support from SYHA and getting resources

SYHA will support all types of groups that have either a remit or a constitution that clearly show they are working for the benefit of their neighbourhood.

7.1 Initial costs of setting up any type of group

We will cover the costs involved in running your first 3 meetings to help you get your group up and running including:

- Printing enough copies of a flyer to go to everyone in the area you want to cover, we can also help you design it
- Covering the cost of a meeting room
- Simple refreshments for your meetings

Get in touch with us if you are setting up a new group and would like this support.

7.2 SYHA Staff time

SYHA staff will support groups, we can come along to some of your meetings and provide you with training advice and guidance.

7.3 Support from other established groups

We can put you in touch with other successful groups who can offer you advice and guidance.

7.4 Financial help from SYHA

The financial help available to you from SYHA after your first 3 meetings depends on the type of group that you are.

If you are TARA you can apply to be recognised by SYHA and if you are successful you will get a yearly support grant to cover the costs of things such as stationery, meeting room hire or contribute towards insurance* etc. The amount you can apply for depends on the number of SYHA homes in the area the group represents and varies from £200 to £400.

We ask groups to provide proof of how they are working in a fair, inclusive, accountable way and using the money for the benefit of the group before they receive any money. This includes letting us have a copy of the group's accounts, constitution and minutes from their annual general meeting. As TARAs work in a more formal way they can

provide these things. TARAs can apply to be recognised following holding their first Annual General Meeting.

Improvement, Project, Social or Activity Groups are set up to be more informal groups and do not need to do the same things as a formal group. Therefore they can not prove in the same way that they are all inclusive, accountable and using the money for the benefit of the group.

If your group is an Action, Improvement, Project, Social or Activity Group and you think you need the regular support grant then you should consider becoming a TARA. Or you could consider apply to SYHA for a Community Grants or for funding from our Neighbourhood Initiative Budget.

* Groups are not required to have insurance. However, you will need public liability insurance for any formal outings or events you organise. If you have premises or equipment, you will also need to insure them.

7.5 Neighbourhood Grants

SYHA also provides funding of up to £400 to part or fully fund a neighbourhood project that benefits and develops your community.

In the past grants have been used to fund extra security for vulnerable residents, tree felling and pruning, a planting scheme on an unused piece of land, a clean up event, Christmas festivities and seaside trips.

We welcome applications from any type of group. You can make an application via SYHA's website or contact us using the contact details on first page of this guide and ask for a neighbourhood grant application form.

7.6 Applying for grants from other organisations

Many organisations have small grant funds that groups can apply to. Some only accept applications from formal groups but others may have more flexible criteria. Examples of organisations that we know groups have successfully received funding or materials from include B&Q, local supermarkets and parish councils.

7.7 Fundraising websites

If you have access to the web there is wealth of information on there about funding. Some websites have newsletters than you can subscribe to and they will then send you regular emails containing information on the latest funding available.

www.fundraising.co.uk www.access-funds.co.uk www.grantnet.com

www.j4bgrants.co.uk www.governmentfunding.org.uk

7.8 Fundraising

As well as the funding SYHA and other organisations offers you could think about raising some funds yourself. The following A – Z of fundraising may give you some ideas.

A Abseil, Aerobics, Afternoon Tea Party, Antiques Fair, Apple Dunking, Archery, Around the World Day, Arts or Crafts, Auction of promises

B Back to Front Day, Bad hair day, Baked beans bath, Ball (themes, summer, winter), Bazaar, Balloon race, Barbecue, Barn dance, Beat the goalie/ penalty shoot out, Bed pushing, Bike ride, Bike-a-thons, Bingo, Book or comic sale, Bop'till you drop, Bouncy castle, Bowling events, Bring and buy sale

C Cabaret, Cake sale / stall, Carnival, Car boot sale, Car wash, Carol service or singing, Chocolate ban, Christmas fair, Christmas card sale, Competitions, Computer games marathon, Concert, Conker championship, Cook book, Cookery contest (like Ready, Steady, Cook), Corny joke competition

D Dance, Darts tournament, Dinner dance, Disco, Dog walk / Show sponsored, Doughnut eating (no licking lips), Dragon boat racing competition, Dress down day

E Easter egg hunt, Eating baked beans with a cocktail stick, Egg & spoon race, Egg painting, Environment Day, Exhibitions, Expert talk

F Face painting, Fair / fete / bazaar, Fancy dress, Fancy dress football, Fashion show, Film show / premiere, Fines box, Flower show, Food stall, Football – 5 a side tournament, Fortune telling, Fun runs

G Games – scrabble, chess, trivial pursuits etc, Garden party, Go-karting, Golf, Green day, Greyhound races, Guess the number (balloons in car, sweets in a bottle), Guess who the baby is (from photos),

H Hair Beading/ plaiting, Hat Party / fancy dress, Halloween parties, Head shave, Heritage walk, Hopscotch

I Ice-cream eating, Ice skating, Indoor games, International evenings, International food / dinner party, It's a knockout

J Jam making, Jazz night / jazz in the garden, Jelly eating, Jelly races, Jewellery making / selling, Jigsaw marathon, Joke-a-thon, Juggling / juggle-a-thon, Jumble sale

K Karaoke, Kite flying, Knobbly knees competition

L Ladies nights, Lawn mowing, Limbo competition, Line dancing, Litter picking, Luncheons

M Magic show, Marathons (running, aerobics, line dancing, badminton, table tennis, dancing, stay awake), Marshmallow eating, Meal and talk, Model making, Murder mystery event, Music quiz, Music recital / concert

N Name the baby / teddy, Natural trails, Nature walking, Netball tournament, Nearly new day, New years party, Noodle sucking

O Obstacle course, Odd clothes day, Odd jobs, One-price stalls, Orienteering, Origami Outgrown clothes sale, Outings

P Pancake day, Pancake race / competition, Pantomime, Party – themed, Pet competition / show, Picnics, Pie eating, Plant sale, Plastic duck race, Puppet show / making, Pool competition / contests, Pram push

R Raffles, Read-a-thon, Record breaking, Reunion, Rounders tournament, Rowing

S Sack races, Santa's grotto, Scalextric Grand Prix, Shoe shining, Show, Skateboard competition, Slide show, Sponsored event – spell, bike ride, swim, shave, silence, Spot the (baby, dog owner), Sports competition or display, Swim-a-thon

T Talent show, Tap dancing, Tea party, Three legged races, Tombola, Treasure hunt, Tree –planting, Trips (hire bus, reduced entry tickets for groups), Twister-a –thon,

U Underwater draughts, Unicycle racing

V Valentines parties / ball / event, Variety show, Vegetarian evening, Volley ball

W Walk, Welly throwing competition, Wheelbarrow races, Wishing well

X X-country races, Xylophone marathon

Y Yo-yo competition, Yodelling competition, Yoga

Z Zany ideas! (we couldn't think of anything beginning with Z, let us know if you can).

8. Useful contacts

The following organisations may be useful to you.

National Tenants Resource Centre

Trafford Hall
Ince Lane
Chester
CH2 4JP
01244 300 246
www.traffordhall.co.uk

Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)

5th Floor
Trafford House
Chester Road
Manchester
M32 0RS
0161 868 3500
Email: info@tpas.org.uk
Website: www.tpas.org.uk

Tenants and Residents Organisation of England (TAROE)

Jackson House
2nd Avenue
Runcorn
WA7 2PD
01928 701001
Email: runcornoffice@taroe.org
Website: www.taroe.org

9. Meetings guidance

9.1 Having a purpose

A meeting will only be successful if people who are at the meeting know what the purpose of the meeting is. Be clear both when you are publicising the meeting and at the start of your meeting why you are holding a meeting and what you want to achieve by the end of it.

9.2 How to decide when to have a meeting?

The time you have your meeting will affect how many people can attend. You can't please everyone but this table may help you decide when to plan your meeting for. Try and plan it to suit the majority of people in your area.

Time of meeting	Who is likely to attend	Who may be put off attending
Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People who take children to school• Elderly residents• Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Those who work• Some disabled people (it depends on their disability)
Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People who have school children• Elderly residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Those who work• People who collect children from school
Evening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Those who work• Younger residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elderly residents• People with children

9.3 Where to have the meeting?

You need to hold the meeting at a venue that is close by. From our experience people generally will not travel far to attend this type of meeting.

The type of venue can also put people off for example a venue that is too cold or too hot will put people off and if there are stairs, you may be putting off those who have difficulty walking. If your venue is a religious building or somewhere that serves alcohol, be aware that it could put off some people from other faiths attending.

Also consider if people will be bringing children along, is there room for children to sit in and draw or play quiet games? You could organise a crèche or childminder.

It isn't always easy but try to select a venue that is considerate to everyone. Local community centres and schools are usually good venues.

9.4 How to invite people to your meetings?

You will need to produce a flyer giving the date, time, venue and purpose of the meeting. It's important that everyone gets the chance to attend the meeting so you should make sure every home in the area your group covers receives one.

Sometimes putting a flyer in a local free paper helps with the delivery or if you are a group that produces a newsletter you could publicise your meetings in it rather than producing a separate flyer. If your neighbourhood has a notice board make sure you advertise the meeting on it. You can also advertise meetings in local shop windows and notice boards in community buildings.

If you need support with producing flyers get in touch with us.

9.5 Who else to invite to your meeting

Depending on the purpose of your meeting as well as people that live in the area you may want to invite others to the meeting. For example you could invite staff from SYHA, local councillors, the neighbourhood police officer or representatives from any other landlords and agencies that can contribute to the purpose of your meeting.

9.6 Before the meeting get together and plan how the meeting will run

If you don't have a committee made up of a chair and secretary you need to decide who will do the following:

- Prepare an agenda and act as a chair to make sure the meeting keeps to the point and everyone has a chance to contribute. You will find a [meeting agenda template at 9.12](#)
- Take notes of the main decisions made at the meeting and who has agreed to do what. You will find a [meeting agenda notes template at 9.13](#) and there is more guidance on how to take notes below
- Take responsibility for keeping an attendance sheet with people's contact details for future reference. You will find an [attendance sheet template at 9.14](#)

9.7 Taking meeting notes

Your meeting notes need to record:

- The date place and time of the meeting
- Who attended the meeting
- Who sent their apologies
- A factual summary of the main points of the meeting including any decisions made or action to be taken, by who and by when. We recommend that you don't take a word for word account of what people say.
- The date and time of the next meeting

We suggested you write up your notes as soon as possible after the meeting so that what happened is still fresh in your memory. You will find a [meeting notes template at 9.13](#) that you can use.

9.8 On the day of the meeting

Make sure you get to your meeting venue early. In our experience it always takes longer than you think to set up a room for a meeting and often people turn up earlier than the meeting start time so be prepared. Before people arrive move furniture in to the layout you want and set out any refreshments.

9.9 Meeting ground rules or guidelines

Not all groups that run effectively have or need ground rules or guidelines but they work very well for some. They can be particularly useful for new attendees so they know what is expected of them.

They detail the type of behaviour you want from people when they come along to your meetings and work well when the group works together to agree them. A word of caution here, be positive and state the behaviours you want to see rather than the ones you don't. A long list of don'ts may put people off wanting to come along. Examples of the sort of things you might want to include are:

- Only one person to speak at a time
- Respect other people at the meeting
- Give everyone the opportunity to have their say

When you have agreed your rules a technique that sometimes works well it is to get people to adopt a rule or guideline and they are then responsible for highlighting when somebody has broken the rule or guideline.

9.10 Top meeting tip

If people come along to the meeting their own personal issues or issues not relevant to that days meeting try issue parking them. This is a tool used at many successful meetings. Before the meeting prepare your issue park. We suggest you take a big piece of paper like a flipchart page and on the top of it write "Issue Park". Stick the piece of paper where people at the meeting can see it.

Then during the meeting if anything comes up that isn't really related to the purpose of your meeting make a note of it on the issue park piece of paper and tell the person raising it you will come back to it either at the end of the meeting or outside the meeting. Make sure you do remember to respond to it at the end or outside of the meeting.

9.11 Make people feel welcome

Some people may not have much experience of coming along to meetings, have difficulty reading paperwork, writing or not feel confident enough to speak in public, but this shouldn't stop them taking part. You need to try and create an environment where everyone feels welcome.

9.12 Example Agenda

Agenda

Anywhere Residents Group 7pm, 1st June 2015

1. Welcome and apologies

Here you introduce any guests and pass on any apologies you have been given from people who cannot make the meeting

2. Minutes from the last meeting

This is where you agree the minutes from the last meeting as a true record and change anything that is incorrect

3. Matters arising

Here you report on any action points from the last meeting

4. Bring and buy sale fundraiser planning

This is an example of what we call a substantive agenda item. They are items that may change from meeting to meeting depending on what the group is working on

5. Bulb planting on Town Street

This is also an example of a substantive agenda item

6. Correspondence

Here the secretary informs everyone of the group's incoming and outgoing mail

7. Members update

Here committee members have the chance to report back from any meetings they have attended on behalf of the group

8. Treasurers report

Here the treasurer can update everyone on the state of the groups finances

9. Any other business

Here is the chance for items to be discussed that were not planned

10. Time and date of next meeting

9.13 Example Meeting Notes

Meeting Notes

Anywhere Residents Group
7pm, 1st June 2015

Present: List who was present and make a note of who chaired the meeting and who took the notes

Apologies: List anyone that let you know they couldn't make the meeting

Agenda item	Actions or decisions	By who	By when
Give brief details of the topic or issue being discussed An couple of examples are given below	Give details of any actions or decisions made	Give details of who is responsible for doing any actions	Give details of when the action will be done by
Bring and buy sale fundraiser planning	Agreed to hold on 15 August 2015. John Black, Sue Brown and Janet Green to arrange meeting to plan for fundraiser and will bring plan to July group meeting.	JB, SB, JG	01.07.15
Bulb planting on Town Street The local authority has invited our group to apply for free bulbs for planting September time.	Agreed we want bulbs to plant on the green area on Town Street. Paul White to contact the local authority and apply for the bulbs.	PW	20.06.15
Date of next meeting	1 st July 2015		

9.14 Example Attendance List

Attendance List

Anywhere Resident Group

Meeting	Annual General Meeting
Time and date	7pm, Thursday 1 st of June 2015
Venue	Anywhere Community Centre

Please add your name and address to this attendance list.

We ask you to do this so in the unlikely event of us having to evacuate the building we can account for you and also so we can give you a copy of the meeting notes.

	Name	Address	Telephone number and email address
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			

10. Model constitution and constitution check list

You need to tailor this model constitution to fit your group. The text in the grey boxes is to guide you and the boxes should be deleted when you take your constitution to a meeting for discussion and approval.

The text in pink is only suggested text. You do not have to use any of the wording but we recommend you cover all of the headings in the constitution if you want to be formally recognised by others and attract funding.



10.1 SYHA Model constitution

1. Name

You need to decide on an appropriate name for your group. Most resident groups have the name of the area in their group name so people easily know what are the group represents.

The name of the Group is:

.....hereafter referred to as the group.

2. Aims and objectives

This section should reflect why the group has come together and what you are trying to achieve. Don't include specific activities such as getting a play area or setting up a youth club, as you may achieve these and then your aims will be outdated. They should be as wide as possible so you can change the specific activities you are focussing on with out having to amend your constitution.

Don't just think about what your aims are right now also think about what you want achieve in the future.

Examples of aims used by other groups include:

- To improve the environment and quality of life for the residents of the area
- To encourage pride in the appearance of the area
- To get better facilities and amenities
- To raise funds to help achieve our aims and finance the costs of the group
- To encourage a better community spirit

The aims and objectives of the Group will be:

2.1

2.2

2.3

2.4

2.5

3. Powers

This section explains how the Group can go about achieving its' aims and objectives. As with the objectives section, you should always bear in mind that your group may expand in the future or change as it develops, so keep your powers broad.

Examples of powers used by other groups include:

- Work in partnership with different organisations
- Invite and receive contributions and raise funds where appropriate, to finance the work of the Group, and to open a bank account to manage such funds.
- Collect and distribute information on anything that affects the objectives of the Group. It can produce, print, publish and circulate papers and publications that may help to achieve the Group's objectives
- Carry out anything else within the law necessary to achieve the group's objectives

To achieve the objectives at 2, the group can:

3.1

3.2

3.3

3.4

3.5

4. Membership

You need to decide who and at what age people can join your group. You also need to decide on a map what area your Group will cover and attach this as an appendix to your constitution.

You may also want to include:

- How members can vote. For example - only members present at a meeting can vote
- If the group can co-op members from outside the area. For example - the group can co-op members outside the area, but they must be put to a vote at a general meeting, where two-thirds of the meeting must carry a vote
- If you have co-op members what their voting rights are. For example - co-opted members shall have no voting rights.

Below we have suggested some text you could use. If you use the text you need to fill in the blanks.

4.1 Membership is open to:

- All residents of the area over the age of years, as defined on the attached map (appendix 1).
- Anyone under the age of will be called a junior member, but will have no voting rights.

5. Equal Opportunities

This section must be included because for your group to succeed it must work for the benefit of all of the community it represents. Some funders will also want to you to show how you will not discriminate against anyone within your area.

5.1 The group shall aim to be representative of the area it represents.

5.2 The group will not discriminate against any member of the community.

5.3 The group shall encourage membership from the whole community regardless of age, sexuality, marital status, disability, ethnic origin, colour, religion, political belief or anything else.

6. Finance

This section deals with the rules governing the group's finances.

Below we have made some suggestions about what you could cover.

6.2 All funds must be used to achieve the objectives of the group and for no other purpose.

6.3 The Treasurer shall open a bank account in the name of the Group.

6.4 Following a written request and within 14 days, a record of the accounts will be made available for inspection by any member.

6.5 Three committee members will be elected at the AGM to sign the group's cheques. Only two will be needed at any one time, one of which must be the Treasurer.

6.6 The group's accounting year shall run from 01 April to 31 March.

6.7 The Treasurer will submit the accounts to a qualified auditor prior to the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

6.8 The Treasurer will present a current balance sheet of the accounts at every committee meeting.

6.9 Expenses may be paid to any member engaged in activities on behalf of the group, as long as prior approval of the journey has been granted by the Committee.

7. The Committee

The committee is the smaller group of members who carry out the day to day running of the group. It is made up of the Chair, Secretary, Treasurer plus a number of other general committee members.

Here you should describe the size of the committee, who can be on it, how and when the committee is elected and how it will run.

There is some suggested text below that you may be able to tailor to the needs of your group. If you use it you will need to fill in the blanks.

7.1 A Committee shall be elected at the first group meeting then annually at the AGM, to carry out the business of the Group.

7.2 The Committee shall consist of a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer.

7.3 In addition up to Committee members will be elected.

7.4 Committee members must beyears of age.

7.5 The Treasurer shall not be from the same household as any other officer position of the committee.

7.6 Members will be elected for a period of up to one year, but may be re-elected at the Group's AGM.

7.7 Vacancies during the year can be filled at a general meeting. The committee shall fill any vacancies arising amongst officers until the next general meeting.

7.8 No member of the committee shall receive any payment for work done on the groups' behalf.

7.9 Any committee member not attending three consecutive meetings without apologies shall be considered to have resigned unless he or she has good reason. The Secretary shall send a letter informing the member prior to the third meeting that the matter will be discussed.

7.10 The group shall have a committee of no less than three people and no more than fifteen.

8. Meetings

You need to say where and how often the group will meet. There are 3 main types of meeting, committee meetings where committee members only meet, general meetings that all members are invited to and the annual general meeting. (AGM)

We have suggested text below for what you might want to include, if you use it you will need to fill in the blanks.

8.1 General meetings

8.1 There will be a general meeting for all members every months.

8.2thirds of committee members must be present in order for a meeting to take place.

8.3 No meeting shall take place if less than members, not counting the committee, are present.

8.4 It shall be the responsibility of the Chairperson to chair all meetings or a designated deputy in his/her absence.

8.5 All meetings must be minuted and accessible to interested parties.

8.6 A special general meeting will be held, when members or more ask for a meeting. A letter should be sent to the Secretary, stating the reasons for requesting a meeting. The meeting will be held within 14 days.

8.7 The Secretary will publicise meetings at least 14 days in advance, stating the business to be discussed, unless it is deemed as an emergency.

This section also tells people how you will conduct your AGM. You should have an AGM every 12 months the maximum period we recommend you should have between AGMs is 15 months.

8.8 There shall be an AGM held everyat which the Committee will report on its work, present a statement of accounts and formally resign.

8.9 The AGM shall take place no later than three months after the end of the financial year.

8.10 The AGM shall elect a new Committee, vote on recommendations and any amendments to the constitution.

8.11 All members are entitled to vote at the AGM. Voting shall be made by a show of hands on a majority basis. In the case of a tied vote, the Chairperson or an appointed deputy shall make the final decision.

9. Changes to the constitution

This section looks at how you can change the constitution. You may find that as you get established there might be areas of it you wish to change so your constitution needs to detail how changes can be made.

The statements we have suggested below may help you decide how it can be done.

9.1 The constitution can only be altered at an AGM or at a special meeting called for that purpose.

9.2 Any suggested changes must be handed to the secretary 14 days before the meeting.

9.3 Changes to the constitution must be agreed by two-thirds of the members present at the meeting.

10. Dissolution

This section deals with what to do if your Group folds, you must adopt rules similar to those you have put in place to make changes to your constitution.

The statements we have suggested below may help you decide how it can be done.

10.1 The group can be dissolved at a Special General Meeting, called for that purpose, and must be publicised 14 days in advance.

10.2 A proposal to dissolve the group will only take effect if agreed by of the members present at the meeting.

10.3 Any assets, financial or otherwise, after paying debts, repaying funding organisations and liabilities shall be returned to the providers or given to other groups with similar charitable objectives.

You need to agree your constitution with your members before you do this we suggest you run through the constitution checklist (appendix ?). You could also run it by us.

You must agree your constitution at an open meeting so everyone has had the opportunity to contribute to it.

This Constitution was adopted at a general meeting held at(insert venue) on the..... of 20??.

Signed: Chair

Signed: Secretary

Signed: Treasurer

10.2 Constitution Checklist

You can use this if you are a new group that is working on putting their constitution together to check you have everything included for SYHA to accept it.

Does the Constitution

	✓
Clearly show who is a member of the group	
Clearly show openness to all members of the community	
Have an equal opportunities section	
Have clear auditing and financial reporting processes	
Show that the committee is elected democratically	
Show that the committee will meet regularly	
Say when the AGM will be held	
Show that members have the chance to regularly hear how the group is working	
Show how changes to the constitution can be made	
Have realistic yet challenging quorum figures. (The number of people who must be at meetings for them to take place and for decisions to be voted on)	
Show that in the event of dissolution, assets and money left will be returned to the provider or distributed to worthy causes after repayment of funders	