

## Protocol for Working with Groups

### 1. Introduction

- The City of London Housing Service believes that community groups and resident associations enhance the richness of life on our social housing estates by encouraging residents to meet each other and to be part of the community.
- We support the right of any group, which is non-political, inclusive and exists for the benefit of residents, to form on an estate. We are committed to treating groups fairly and equally.

### 2. Registering group details

- We have a simple form which groups must complete and return to the Estate Manager if they wish to benefit from the support available to them. The form should be renewed annually so that the Estate Office has up to date contact details.
- Where appropriate, a list of current groups on the estate and their contact details will be printed in each Estate Newsletter. A link can also be shared online if groups wish.

### 3. Support available for groups

- Groups can find out about and apply for small grants by contacting their Estate Manager. Applications may be made for help with ongoing running costs, or the cost of running an event or activity for residents.
- Training for groups and individuals may also be arranged if requested. Examples of the type of training which may be provided are:
  - Chairing and running meetings;
  - Note taking;
  - Running events;
  - Carrying out risk assessments;
  - Equality and diversity matters;
  - First aid.
- The Housing & Neighbourhoods Service pays for indemnity insurance to cover events run by staff and/or residents on its estates.
- Facilities such as printing, copying, use of meeting space may be available from the Estate Office, depending on the number of groups requesting this and what availability there is. Materials such as printer paper may also be available.
- Model constitutions and policies are available for groups to use if they wish.
- The Estate Office may allow access to estate noticeboards for displaying A4 posters and may also be able to arrange for information to be sent out to residents via email or social media. The Estate Manager has the right to refuse to display or distribute any material which he/she considers to be misleading, inappropriate or offensive.

#### **4. Consultation and issues raised**

- We believe that we should communicate and directly engage with the entire estate community. We do so via newsletters, meetings and drop-ins, bulletins, walkabouts and other means of communications.
- The focus of Estate Managers' time is on working with the entire estate community, and may not be dedicated solely to one group. Therefore, there is no obligation for the Estate Manager to attend the meetings of any group unless he/she considers on occasion, that this is an appropriate use of time. Members of any group have the right to attend all open meetings, drop-ins, walkabouts and other events as residents of the estate.
- All consultation will be with the whole population of the estate or, in the case of items such as major works, with the residents affected. However, we welcome the views of resident groups, so they may submit a collective response to any consultation exercise, in addition to their individual responses as individual residents. Any group views will be taken into consideration when the consultation feedback is analysed.
- On occasion, a group, through its Chair or other nominated individual, may raise any issue or question with the Estate Manager. The Estate Manager will look into the issue raised and will send a response to all residents on the estate, through the Estate Newsletter or other channels. The response will record that the issue was raised by a specific group.

#### **5. Unacceptable behaviour from resident groups**

- The majority of our groups wish to work with the Housing Service in a collaborative and constructive way.
- We understand that there will be times when a group will give negative feedback or criticism to the Housing Service and we welcome this being done in an appropriate way so that we can address areas of concern.
- If any person representing a group behaves in a way which is unacceptable or becomes vexatious, then we will take action. Examples would be abusive or intimidating behaviour or excessive and/or inappropriate correspondence. In such cases, our first action would be to draw the issue to the attention of the Chair or where appropriate another officer of the group, asking for it to cease. If the unacceptable behaviour continues, it may be necessary to withdraw altogether from communicating with or recognising the group. This will only take place with the agreement of the Director of Community & Children's Services. If approval to such a request is given, the group will cease to be eligible to apply for grants or to receive other support from officers.