

Guide

for starting up and
running residents
associations



Residents associations (RA) can help customers foster a sense of pride and bring the community together on issues that affect them. Importantly it gives them a voice. Something that we're passionate about supporting at Abri. The advice this guide offers should be tailored to what is right for your community.

Liaising with other local groups and community organisations will provide information and experience that can't be contained in a written guide. You may also encourage some new members. Think about liaising with lunch clubs, mother and toddler groups, youth clubs, schools and different ethnic community groups. Setting up a residents association can be a lot of fun and hard work, but many have achieved great outcomes for their communities.



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Why a residents association?

Groups of residents may start a residents association for many reasons, including:

- To create a better sense of community and for neighbours to get to know each other.
- To be more involved in the decisions taken by Abri that affect residents, leaseholders and homeowners.
- To arrange social events or trips for residents and promote community spirit.
- To keep residents informed of what's happening in your neighbourhood.
- Opening opportunities to apply for grants/ funding which could help with planning for projects and activities for the community.
- Promoting community safety in an area working with local partners and Abri.
- Campaigning for something, such as somewhere for the children to play or a better bus service.

Residents associations can be a powerful way to achieve change.

Setting up your residents association

Start by talking to other neighbours in your block or area. Explain that you're thinking of starting up a residents association and find out if they would be interested in being a member and what aims they would be interested in pursuing with the group.

Contact your Abri Community Development Officer for support and advice by emailing ciadmin@abri.co.uk.

Share what issues are important to local people.

Arrange a public meeting and publicise it to all residents. This can be done digitally or face-to-face. Your Community Development Officer can support you to set up your first meeting and advise on how you create a constitution and appoint members.

Hold the meeting and get volunteers to form a steering group to get the residents association going.

Steering group meets to work out the aims of the residents association and to work on its constitution.

Hold a second public meeting to agree constitution and elect a committee for the group. This process, although formal, is quite straight forward.

Abri will work with your committee to make sure you are able to move forward with the priorities of the community. Once set up, you can apply to the Abri residents association grant to support the running of the group.

The constitution

Your residents association will need to have a constitution (a list of rules) so that everybody knows what its aims and objectives are and how it is going to achieve them.

See appendix 1 for an example.

The code of conduct

This lays out the principles, standards, and the moral and ethical expectations that members are held to.

See appendix 7 for an example.

Your committee

The committee is responsible for steering the association, the day-to-day work between meetings, and making sure its aims are followed.

The committee will need to hold its own meetings to organise its work; this is usually done on a monthly basis between general meetings. Minutes of committee meetings will need to be taken.

Here are some of the key points to a successful committee:

- Work together as a group
- Listen and support each other
- Do what you say you will
- Abide by decisions made
- Report progress to members of the association
- Listen to what members of the association want
- Share the load with each other
- Be a representative of your membership
- Enjoy yourselves!

A committee will usually consist of a Chair, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. In some cases, an association also chooses to have other officers, which may include a Vice-Chair, a Vice-Secretary, a Press and Publicity Officer, or a Fundraiser. The committee can also have a number of places for general members.

Your residents association needs to decide which officers and how many committee members you will need. If you decide at a future date that you need more officers, you can amend your constitution accordingly.



The Chair

The Chair provides leadership and guides the residents association to achieve its aims. They will chair the meetings and set the meeting agendas with the Secretary. The Chair will know about all the activities carried out by the association.

Chairing a meeting

Good chairing is the key to a successful meeting. And a good meeting is one that achieves its purpose. Meetings should be interesting, accessible to everybody, and conducted in a calm, fair and friendly manner.

The golden rule for meetings is know what you are there for - have a clear agenda.

As Chair you will:

- Introduce and summarise the purpose of the meeting
- Introduce agenda items with the necessary information
- Encourage decision making
- Keep people to the point and stop them talking for too long
- Give people the opportunity to participate.

Tips to help achieve success:

- Start meetings on time
- Keep to the agenda
- Be positive and look for solutions to problems
- Make sure items to be discussed are prepared properly; do you have all the information you need?
- Make sure decisions are clearly taken and agreed
- Make sure everybody has an opportunity to express their views
- Don't let a few people dominate
- Be polite and encouraging
- Don't put people down
- Don't allow people to make personal criticisms of each other

Ground rules

If topics to be discussed are likely to produce a conflict of views, the Chair should ask the meeting to agree a set of rules at the beginning.

These could include:

- The Chair will be the one who is in control
- Only one person to speak at a time
- Everybody agreeing to let people have their say without interruption
- No personal criticisms to be allowed
- A time limit on speakers

All committee members have a responsibility to support the Chair's role by abiding by the rules and encouraging others to do so.

The Secretary

The Secretary's role includes the administration and communication for the group. They will:

- Arrange meeting venues
- Let people know when meetings are being held
- Make a written record of decisions made at meetings (minutes)
- Keep copies of minutes
- Help the Chair set agendas for meetings
- Receive and write letters for the association
- Keep a record of who has joined the residents association.

The Secretary should organise the tasks, not necessarily carry them all out.

The Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for keeping records of the finances of the association. The main duties include:

- Opening a bank, building society, or post office account in the name of the association
- Paying money received into the account
- Drawing money or cheques from the account
- Keeping a record of money received and spent
- Preparing statements for the committee and Annual General Meeting
- Keeping petty cash for the association and a petty cash account book for day-to-day expenditure

It's important that the Treasurer knows it's their responsibility for keeping accounts and informing people of the associations' financial situation. It's the committee's responsibility to decide how the money is spent; however, no money should be spent by the association without the knowledge of the Treasurer.

Cheque signatories should not be relatives or members of the same household. It is good practice for committee members to be unrelated, but if you do find that both partners in a couple are elected as members of your committee, make sure only one can sign cheques.

General members

Members

- Attend committee meetings and participate in decisions
- Support officers of the committee in their work
- Take on specific tasks on behalf of the committee, for example publicity and fundraising

Meetings

As a residents association you will usually hold the following meetings:

- Committee meetings: For the committee members to carry out the work of the association.
- General meetings: For all members of the association and may be open to non-members at the discretion of the committee.
- Annual General Meetings (AGM): Held once a year and open to all residents covered by the association's area.
- Special General Meetings: These are held at the request of a minimum number of members, specified in your constitution.

Arranging meetings

It is worth considering:

- Venue: Where are you going to hold your meeting? Is it close enough for everybody to get to?
- Layout: Think about how you want the chairs laid out, formally or informally. Consider disabled and wheelchair access.
- Timing: Choose a day and a time which suits as many people as possible.
- Digital meetings: Is there a possibility to do the meeting online (on Zoom or MS Teams for example)?



The agenda | Minutes

All meetings should have an agenda to make sure those attending know what is going to be discussed and to make sure that you get through the business you need to.

See appendix 2 for an example agenda.

Attendance lists

It is important to keep records of who attends your meeting, for both fire safety reasons and so people can be kept updated.

See appendix 3 for an example list.

It's the Secretary's responsibility to take minutes of all meetings, or another committee member in their absence. Minutes should be an accurate, impartial record of the decisions made at a meeting.

A master copy of all the minutes should be kept by the Secretary, in date order, and must be made available to members to refer to on request.

See appendix 4 for an example template for minutes.

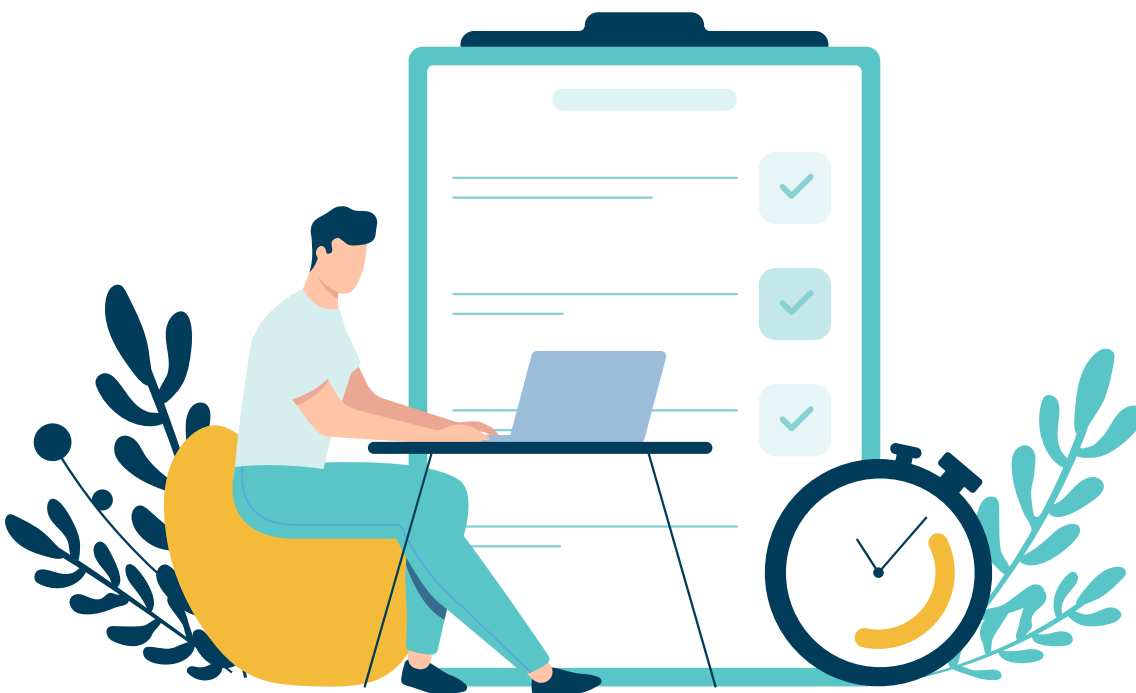
Keeping records

The finances of your residents association are very important, and you will need to make sure that all financial transactions that you carry out are in accordance with the Constitution. All the money that is raised by the association must be used to further the aims of the group and so you will have to have an accounting system that clearly shows where and how money has been received and spent.

Records of income and expenditure should be kept.

The Treasurer should report to the committee on the state of the associations' funds. Each year at the Annual General Meeting the Treasurer is responsible for presenting audited accounts to the members.

See appendix 6 for an example income and expenditure template.



Representing your community

It's important to get as many members as possible from the area you represent and from the different groups of people you represent. This means working to encourage younger people, older people, families and people from different ethnic groups to join in your resident's association.

A residents association should represent the views of its community, not just those of its committee or a small number of members.

To make sure that you are representing your community you will need to ask members for their views on a regular basis. You can do this through:

- General and Annual General Meetings
- A resident's newsletter
- Surveys
- Social media

Here are some things to consider when reviewing if your group will represent the views of your community:

Are your meeting times and venues suitable for all members?

Find out about your member's needs; for example, transport, childcare, access, and sight/hearing.

Make sure that everyone can understand the information that you send out. (Do you need to arrange for information to be translated into languages other than English, or do you need to make taped or Braille information available?).

Grants and training

We can offer your association grants to help with setting up, ongoing administration fees, and community projects. We can also help source training to improve skills. To find out more get in touch with our Community Investment Team by emailing ciadmin@abri.co.uk or check out our website www.abri.co.uk.

Appendix 1 – example constitution

MODEL CONSTITUTION

1. NAME

The name of the group shall be.....

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of the group is to promote and protect the interests of the local residents living in.....

2. MEMBERSHIP

Membership shall be open to any interested person living in the area covered by the group over the age of 16. All members shall have an equal vote.

3. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Members of the group shall seek to actively represent the needs of the whole community and must not discriminate on the grounds of nationality, political opinion, age, race, gender, disability, sexuality orientation, religious opinion or belief. Evidence of this should be reported during the AGM.

4. THE COMMITTEE

At the Annual General Meeting members shall elect a committee. The committee is responsible for the management of the group.

The committee will be made up of the following members: Chair, , Secretary, Treasurer and other general members.

Nominations will be put forward for the committee no later than 10 days before the election. The committee will be elected by means of a confidential ballot. All members will have one vote and can use a vote by proxy.

If vacancies arise among the officers of the committee, the committee have the power to fill them amongst their general members.

The committee may form sub-groups to deal with specific issues, but these must report to the committee.

The committee shall meet not less than.....times a year.

Minutes shall be taken of committee meetings and shall be available to all members and Abri.

5. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

There shall be an Annual General Meeting (AGM) held every year in.....The following will be included as agenda items:

- Annual report from the committee – what the group have achieved
- Statement of accounts – what the group have spent/received
- Election of committee – new members elected
- Amendments to the Constitution – any updates to how the group operates

The committee will notify all members of the date no later than 14 days before the AGM.

6. GENERAL MEETINGS

In addition to the Annual General Meeting the committee will call at least..... meetings per year, which all members of the group may attend.

All general meetings shall be advertised to members at least five days in advance.

A Special General Meeting open to all members will be held if required.

7. QUORUM

No general, Special General or Annual General Meeting shall take place if less thanmembers are present.

10. CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Constitution of the group may be altered at the AGM.

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

The group shall notify Abri of changes to its constitution within 28 days.

11. FINANCE

All monies raised by or on behalf of the group shall be applied to further the objects and aims of the group and for no other purpose.

The Treasurer shall open a bank/building society account in the name of the association.

The Treasurer shall keep a proper account of the income and expenditure of the association.

At least two cheque signatories shall be nominated by the committee (one to be the Treasurer.)

Any expenditure over £..... shall be authorised by the committee at meetings.

12. DISSOLUTION

The association may only be dissolved at a Special General Meeting called for that purpose and advertised fourteen days before the meeting to all members.

12 of the members present at the meeting must agree to the dissolution and the whole community should be invited. If the numbers are not enough at the meeting then the community will be consulted and asked for reps, then it will be dissolved.

Any funds and possessions shall be donated to a charity or charities of the community's choice.

13. STANDING ORDERS

Members shall at all times abide by the code of conduct. Members may be excluded if they fail to do so.

The Chair shall have a second, casting vote in the event of a resolution at any meetings being held.

CHAIR:..... Date:.....

SECRETARY:..... Date:.....

14. RECOGNITION:

For your association to be recognised by Abri you will need to make sure the following items are included in your constitution:

- i. Membership must be open to all residents in the area of your association.
- ii. A clear statement on the associations' commitment to equal opportunities in its membership and work.
- iii. All committee members should sign a code of conduct when joining the group.
- iv. Your association must hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) to which all residents are invited.
- v. Provision for a committee to be elected at the AGM.
- vi. A proper system of accounting must be maintained.

Appendix 2 - example agenda

The Tree's Residents Association
Oakwood Lane Community Hall
27 January 2022
7-8.30pm
Type of meeting: general meeting

Agenda topics

1. Welcome
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of the last meeting
4. Matters arising
5. Summer fete
6. Plans for new play area
7. Parking
8. Any other business
9. Date and time of next meeting

Special notes: none

Appendix 3- example attendance list

The Tree's Residents Association

Attendance List

Meeting: Annual General Meeting

Date and time: 27 January 2022 – 7pm

Venue: Oakwood Lane Community Hall

Please add your name and postcode to the attendance list. It is used for two purposes:

- for safety reasons – we need to know who is in the building if there is any kind of emergency.
- to make sure that everybody present is given a copy of the minutes from the meeting and any other follow up information.

Thank you

(Please print)

Name	Postcode

Appendix 6 – example income and expenditure

The Tree's Residents Association
Income and expenditure account
For the period 1 January to 31 December 2021

Income	£	£
Grant received D.H.A		150.00
Fundraising income		130.00
Total		280.00

Expenditure	£
Photocopying	4.00
Postage	2.00
Travel	6.00
Total	12.00

Excess of income over expenditure	268.00
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The Tree's Residents Association
Balance Sheet, as at 31 December 2001
Current assets

Cash at building society	250.00
Amounts owed to the association	10.00
Petty cash	8.00
Sub-total	268.00
Less: amounts owed by the association	12.00
Total	256.00

Appendix 7- example code of conduct

The purpose of the code of conduct is to make sure we offer a safe and secure environment for all atresidents association.

All members must sign the code of conduct and adhere to its terms in order to be a member

- Meetings must start at the stated time.
- Treat everyone equally, with fairness, dignity and without discrimination.
- Work together for the benefit of all residents.
- Speakers should raise a hand to speak and go through the Chair.
- Speakers must keep to the subject being discussed.
- Give constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Voice opinions and views in an appropriate manner.
- Allow everyone to have the opportunity to speak and be heard, one person should speak at a time.
- Participate in the group with openness and honesty.
- Raise any concerns in an appropriate manner, at an appropriate time and place, with the Chair.
- Take appropriate measures to safeguard confidential information.
- Any personal grievances should not be brought to the meeting, discuss this separately with the relevant people.
- If a conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest arises, it will be raised immediately with the Chair of the committee.
- Do not use personal social media or any other form of personal media to pass on information received in the role of committee member.
- Urgent items under 'any other business' should be notified to the Chair before the meeting and will be discussed at the Chair's discretion.
- Wherever possible jargon should be avoided. If used, then a full explanation should be given.

Any person who fails to meet the above expectations or who acts in an aggressive or offensive manner will have their membership withdrawn. This will be dependent on the individual situation and the group will decide together how long the membership will be withdrawn.

Aggressive or offensive behaviour could include (but is not limited to):

- Interrupting
- Dominating conversations
- Not listening to others
- Using racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic or other offensive language

I agree by signing below I will adhere to the Code of Conduct

Signature Date.....

Print name

