A GUIDE TO SETTING UP A RESIDENTS GROUP

We want our residents to feel empowered to make a difference to their communities and where they live, and starting a residents’ group can be a valuable way to achieve this. This information pack will give you advice on how to start a group.

Why start a residents’ group?

People set up groups for many different reasons. Sometimes it is to campaign for improvements to where they live, to tackle specific issues, or to strengthen a community. Other reasons for starting a group can include:

- To work together to maintain standards where you live
- To campaign for local issues
- To help resolve disputes between residents, or anti-social behaviour
- To organise social events or other activities
- To represent residents’ views
- To create a positive working relationship with your landlord

How do we set one up?

This step by step guide should give you advice on how to set up a residents’ group in your local area.

Step 1 – find out if other residents are interested

If you are keen to set up a group in your area, then the first thing you need to do is speak with your neighbours and other residents, and find out if other people are interested in the idea. Some ideas for gauging interest include:

- Raising the idea at any locally organised meetings
- Speak with residents in passing
- Posting the idea on a communal notice board and asking people to sign if they are interested
- Leaflet dropping or door knocking if you live in street properties

Step 2 – Building support for your group

You can then look to get wider support from local residents. Some ideas on getting this support include:

- Displaying posters in communal areas
- Posting flyers
- Door-knocking
- Holding a meeting for all residents
It is important that everyone in the area that your group will be representing is given the opportunity to be involved. The following tips may be useful when trying to build support for your group:

- Some people may have many views and suggestions; however others may not want to be involved at all. Don’t be put off by this, and always respect people’s right not to be involved.
- Talk to people about the benefits of starting a group, and how it can be a great way to work positively with your landlord and other organisations.
- Find out if there are any other local residents’ groups, and invite them to talk about their experiences.

**Step 3 – Decide who will lead on the establishment of the group**

If there is enough support for your group, then it is good to elect a small number of residents who will be able to lead on developing the group in the early stages. Some of the tasks prior to holding your first meeting include:

- Drafting your constitution. Guinness have a model constitution which you can use, however you will need to agree on some issues to make the constitution relevant to your group, including:
  - What is the name of your group?
  - Which area will your group cover?
  - What are the aims of the group?
  - How often will the group meet?
  - Which officer and committee members should you have, and what is their role?
- Setting a date for your first meeting.

**Step 4 – Plan your first meeting**

If there is enough support for the group, then you should begin to plan your first meeting.

- Consider where to hold your first meeting. Usually schools and community centres have rooms available for hire. Remember – the closer you can hold your meeting to the properties your group will cover, the more likely it will be that people will attend.
- Make sure any venue is fully wheelchair accessible (if the meeting is not held on the ground floor – make sure there is a lift)
- Consider what time to hold your meeting. You want to make it easy for everyone to attend, so think about people that may have daytime commitments, but also don’t hold a meeting too late in the evening.
- Think about how to advertise your meeting. Some ideas include posters, leaflets, or door-knocking. It is also good to remind people a day or two before the meeting.
- Put together an agenda. Ideas for your agenda include:
- Welcome and introductions – ask everyone to introduce themselves and explain the purpose of the meeting
- Guest Speakers – If you have invited any guest speakers, make sure they know why they are there, and what they will be talking about
- Adopt your constitution – Ideally this should be sent out prior to the meeting, so that everyone will have chance to read it beforehand. This should avoid any objections being made at the meeting. The constitution and the establishment of your group needs to be agreed by a majority of people present (this does not include any guests or staff members)

**Step 5 – Holding the meeting**

This is the ideal time for you to really promote the benefits of having a group, and a chance to secure more support. It is also a chance for you to agree your constitution and formally elect your committee. Here are some tips to make your meeting successful:

- Make sure different people have different tasks and responsibilities
- Elect someone to chair the meeting
- Arrive early to set up the venue
- Have spare copies of any documents (such as the agenda and constitution)
- Have refreshments available (tea, coffee, juice, fruit, biscuits etc.)
- Make sure the environment is friendly and welcoming
- Give everyone a chance to interact socially
- Keep a record of who has attended. This can be done by handing round an attendance sheet
- Try and keep to the agenda, and be aware of time. You do not want your meeting to run on longer than planned
- Be aware and encourage residents to share their thoughts
- Ensure access for disabled people is appropriate

**Step 6 – Nearly there!**

Guinness can provide guidance with regards to model constitutions for your group. We do listen to our customers and take special account of feedback that represents the views of a whole group of people. We do not ask groups to go through a process of recognition in order to give us their views. We’re not able to provide funding support to resident groups but will always try to attend local meetings and events where possible. Your best first point of contact is the Customer Liaison Officer for your local area.

If you have any further questions you can contact the Customer Experience Team at Guinness by emailing customerexperientcequest@guinness.org.uk or calling 020 3819 0104.