

What is a TRA?

Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs) bring together communities of tenants and leaseholders to have a strong, accountable collective voice when dealing with their landlord.

Tenants and Residents Associations are:

Local

TRAs cover a single housing estate or a local set of streets.

Open

All residents, regardless of tenure, gender, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation, are entitled to take part in elections and meetings.

Accountable

TRAs are democratic and representative. Typically, the Chair and the Committee are elected by residents at an Annual General Meeting.

TRAs are mostly unincorporated, though they typically have a written constitution.

Why it is important for landlords to work with TRAs

Social housing landlords increasingly use focus groups, scrutiny panels and drop-in sessions to engage with residents. Participants tend to be self-selected or chosen by the landlord.

There is no harm in these informal exercises so long as they are not seen as an alternative to working closely with elected and accountable TRA representatives.

The 'focus group' model **treats tenants as 'customers'** but a tenant's relationship with their social landlord is not the same as their relationship with, for instance, a supermarket.

The **shortage of social housing** in London means tenants are not easily able to 'vote with their feet' and choose another social landlord if there is a problem with their own. By providing a collective voice and accountability, TRAs and Tenants Federations are structures which help address the **power imbalance** this creates between tenants and their landlord.

Who are London Tenants Federation?

We bring together representative social housing tenants organisations to influence London-wide policies and decisions which affect their shared concerns.

TRAs send reps to —> **Landlord-wide tenants networks or federations**

which send reps to —>

London Tenants Federation

There are fifteen borough-wide Tenants Federations across London and one housing association Tenants Federation, Catalyst Tenants Federation. We also work in close partnership with the London Federation of Housing Co-ops and the National Federation of TMOs.



Case Study

Meet Lynn, Chair of Poynders Garden Estate TRA



Volunteer Hours spent per year: >680

Unofficial roles: Social worker, caretaker, event organiser, fundraiser, youth worker, midwife.

Greatest achievement: Getting the playground up and running. "It was derelict. We got the kids to design it themselves. They'd look after it really well – too well, in fact. I used to get a knock on my door, 'Lynn! Have you got a broom? Someone's made a mess down there'."

Tell me about where you live

There are 282 flats here and we have a great community. It's family-oriented. The young ones have grown up together, some have got married. Around Christmas this year, someone's benefits had been stopped. We did a whip-round and got £50 for his electric. I refer vulnerable people to the social services as well. I've delivered two babies on this estate. Nine deaths, I've found, too. It's not always easy.

How did you get involved with the TRA?

I was involved with setting it up thirteen years ago. People saw that I was active on the estate, meeting up with the cleaners, and so on, so one year at an Annual General Meeting I was nominated to be Chair. I nearly fell through the floor, I was so embarrassed!

How do you keep people involved and informed?

We'll do a Fun Day for kids and while we have the parents there we'll have the Annual General Meeting. Our secretary, Ron, goes to the London Tenants Federation meetings on our behalf – we're a good team. I only got email three years ago. Before then I was knocking on doors, writing newsletters, going to the shop to buy stamps! For the past 22 months, we've been having major works and people come to me with their keys and ask if I can let the contractors in for them.

What is your relationship with your landlord like?

I have a good relationship with the housing officers, I've seen many of them come and go. I'm helpful. A cleaner will report a blocked drain to me and I'll report it to the council – it speeds the process up.

What makes it worthwhile?

I just like helping people out. Knowing that you've done something for someone.

This document was produced by London Tenants Federation (LTF) with the assistance of the National Federation of TMOs and the London Federation of Housing Co-ops.

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