



ONGO HOMES RECOGNITION CRITERIA FOR LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS & RESIDENT ASSOCIATIONS

1. Introduction

Ongo Homes is committed to ensuring that a range of opportunities exist for residents to influence and shape its' services and to enable them to make a difference within their respective communities. One of the key means of achieving this is through the support of local resident associations.

In addition the Homes England consumer standard (Tenant Involvement & Empowerment) encourages Housing Associations to provide opportunities for Community groups and Resident Associations to participate in a wide range of issues. It also expects Housing Associations to make the relevant resources and support available to these groups so that they are enabled and empowered to operate independently, efficiently and effectively.

This criteria details the support that is provided by Ongo Homes to formally recognise a Community group and Residents Association.

2. Recognition Criteria

Ongo Homes has a responsibility to ensure that Community groups and Resident Associations are being truly representative of, and are accountable to, their local neighbourhoods. It must also ensure that a Community group or Residents Association that is given recognition, funding and other support is meeting the basic criteria set down below.

In order to qualify for recognition, a group must:

- Represent an area where a substantial number of residents are Ongo Homes tenants or leaseholders
- Elect a Committee and Officers who will be responsible for running the group and ensure they undertake all training relevant for their roles



- Adopt a constitution and adhere to it. A model constitution is provided by Ongo Homes and includes details of:
 - the full name of the group or association
 - the boundary area to be represented, e.g. the area of benefit
 - the aims and objectives of the group or association
 - the minimum number of public meetings to be held during a calendar year
 - the minimum number of committee meetings to be held during a calendar year
 - the AGM (Annual General Meeting)
 - financial information and accounts
 - membership
 - role of officers and committee members
 - a commitment to equality and diversity
 - dissolving associations

The model constitution should be considered as a good practice guide that the group can amend to reflect their specific requirements and objectives. However, as a minimum, all of the above bullet points must apply.

- The group or association must sign up to the Customer Engagement Volunteers' Code of Conduct. This is a document that covers issues such as showing respect for others, behaviour and conduct, equality of opportunities and a commitment to confidentiality where appropriate. The Officers and Committee members of the group or association will be responsible for signing a signature page to show their agreement with the document.

This criteria should be considered as a binding agreement between Ongo Homes and the Community group or Resident Association; therefore the two parties must conform to the agreement and take responsibility for their part in it.

3. Support Available for New Groups

Ongo Homes will provide the following support that will help and assist Community groups and Resident Associations to become self sufficient and effective within their community:

- Support and advice to help establish the committee members in their roles
- Assistance for holding public meetings
- Support with carrying out doors knocks, leaflet distribution, leaflet design and printing, where appropriate
- Training for volunteers
- "Out of pocket" expenses when representing the association at Ongo Homes events
- Grants from Ongo Homes (details included in the Customer Engagement expenses policy)

- Signposting to other agencies and funding opportunities
- Support with planning activities that will benefit the local community, e.g. fun days, coffee mornings, social events
- Attendance at public meetings to provide a Housing Management Report
- Feedback to meetings on agenda items taken away for action
- Advice when planning activities for a group to ensure there are no barriers that would prevent people from being involved, for example:
 - venue for meetings/events to have disabled access
 - special requirements – make provisions for anyone with eye sight or hearing difficulties, e.g. resident association flyers and minutes available in large print where required, hearing loop

The above is a general guide on the support that is available but there may be other areas that require a different level of support. These areas will be considered on a case by case basis.

4. Established Community Groups & Residents Associations

By working in partnership with Ongo Homes, support will be provided, where appropriate, to committee members to help them to become established in their roles and to manage and operate their groups effectively. Support will also be provided to groups who want to extend their area of benefit or merge with another group.

Ongo Homes' Customer Engagement Team will support a Community group or Residents Association by attending its meetings to offer advice and support for no more than six months after its constitution has been formally adopted. The Community group or Residents Association should be capable of operating independently and of adhering to the rules of its constitution by the end of this six month period.

Once the group is operating independently at the end of the six months period, then an Officer from Ongo Homes will attend future public meetings to provide a Housing Management Report.

A Customer Engagement Officer will attend the group's Annual General Meetings to assist in the committee election process.

To be formally recognised by Ongo Homes, an established Community group or Residents Association must continue to:

- Work in partnership with Ongo Homes
- Operate in accordance with the Customer Engagement Volunteers Code of Conduct
- Adhere to its constitution and represent the boundary areas identified

- Ensure that members of the association living within the area of benefit are regularly informed and consulted on meetings, actions, consultations and other activities carried out by the association (regardless of whether they are actively involved or not)
- Elect officers and committee members at the Annual General Meetings
- Keep financial records (in accordance with the finance procedure) up to date and submit them for checking six weeks prior to the Annual General Meeting (include updates on any external funding received)
- Send copies of all public meeting minutes to Ongo Homes, within three weeks of the meeting taking place (this will allow for officers to follow up on any actions they are responsible for)
- Hold regular committee meetings to progress the aims of the group and to agree agenda items for public meetings
- Keep Ongo Homes up to date with activities organised by the association
- Work on ideas and projects to enhance the quality of life for all residents in their neighbourhoods

5. Benefits of Ongo Homes Recognition

Community Voice is the Customer Engagement tenant umbrella structure that is recognised as the main consultation forum that works in partnership with Ongo Homes. These meetings are important to all tenants and leaseholders (including representatives from Community groups and Resident Associations) and we therefore encourage that representation is made by attending regular meetings.

After a successful Annual General Meeting has been held (which means when all Officer and committee roles have been elected), Customer Engagement will arrange for the payment of the annual grant to be made. Further details about these grants are included in the guidance notes on Funding & Grants, available from the Customer Engagement team.

Formerly recognised Community groups and Resident Associations are also eligible to apply for funding from various organisations to help fund specific projects that will be of benefit to their local neighbourhood.

Additional grants or funding received by groups will be monitored by Customer Engagement and the committee to ensure that money is being allocated to the individual projects identified, (also checking that projects/events are being inclusive to members living in the area of benefit).

A recognised Community group or Resident Association will also receive appropriate training to help improve skills, along with support and guidance tailored to their need by the Customer Engagement team. When new groups are formed we would expect the committee members to attend mandatory training on Equality & Diversity. Following the AGMs any new committee members who join a group would also be expected to attend Equality & Diversity training, existing groups would be encouraged to attend refresher training.

6. Monitoring of Recognition criteria

Ongo Homes will provide support and assistance to all new and existing groups to enable them to comply with the agreed criteria.

Monitoring arrangements will be in place to check on the effectiveness of groups. This will be carried out by using a range of methods and may include the surveying of all members represented by a group to establish whether they are being invited to attend public meetings and whether they feel the committee is consulting effectively with them. Representatives from a Community group or Resident Association can also carry out their own independent self assessment within the area they represent.

Ongo Homes will, together with representatives from the recognised Community groups and Resident Associations review this recognition criteria on an annual basis.

Copies of this criteria are available from Ongo Homes upon request and can also be found on the Ongo Homes website (www.ongo.co.uk).

Other customer engagement documents available include:

- The Customer Engagement Handbook
- Menu of Options
- Customer Engagement Strategy
- Volunteers' Expenses Policy and related leaflet
- Handy Hints Guide to Organising events
- Information Guide on Running a Resident Association (for new groups)