



Information Note

Developing a Tenants & Residents Federation

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SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

Considering a Federation

These notes are for tenants and residents active in local associations who may be considering setting up a federation of local associations.

What is a federation?

A Federation is a constituted organisation whose membership comes from local tenants and residents associations. It must have a democratic constitution and elect a committee and office bearers to carry out its functions.

Member organisations and groups are normally constituted organisations, democratically accountable to local people. However in some cases Federations have a clause in their constitution to allow individuals to join particularly if the federation covers a rural area or where tenants are unable or it would be difficult to form formal groups (e.g. in some forms of supported accommodation.)

Federations can be made up of groups covering a Council area or from an area covered by a housing association or jointly including Council and housing association(s) groups operating within a defined geographical area.

Federations can act in a representative capacity for their membership. They cannot, however, dictate the views of individual member organisations.

Some roles a federation can take on

1. Campaigning on behalf of its members;
2. Negotiating with the landlord (council or housing association) and other agencies in pursuit of members' interests;
3. Sharing information among members and sharing resources. (For example premises, office equipment (photocopier, computer, printer) ;
4. Bringing members together to share knowledge and experience;
5. Co-ordinating training and information gathering;
6. Helping new associations starting up, or associations having difficulties. Encouraging the formation of local associations in areas that don't have them.

Advantage of a Federation

In Federations, groups can work together in ways, which are beyond the scope of individual associations. Federations can strengthen the tenants' movement in many ways. These include:

1. Member organisations helping each other;
2. Speaking with one united stronger voice on issues of common concern;

Considering a Federation

3. For example, there are many issues that affect all tenants of the same landlord in a similar way. It makes sense for tenants to try to influence their landlord in a united way on these issues;
4. Having more power to reach the real decision makers;
5. Sharing and learning from each others experience and knowledge
6. Helping new or less experienced groups in the area by providing support and advice
7. Circulating information to tenants through leaflets or newsletters
8. Bigger federations may be able to get resources to employ their own staff.

Some of the difficulties

Deciding what types of local groups are eligible to be members;

Making more demands on the time of active local representatives, who take on responsibilities for the Federation. Neglecting the work of local associations in favour of work at federation level;

Ensuring that the Federation starts out and remains genuinely democratic. Trying to avoid the work of the Federation becoming over bureaucratic.

Setting Up A Federation

The first step is to set up a steering group. The steering group needs to do the planning work to get the federation off the ground.

This steering group should work towards an inaugural general meeting to constitute the federation and elect a committee and office bearers.

A constitution has to be drawn up to suit the circumstances in the area. A basic federation constitution is included as an appendix, which can be used as a starting point.

Practical organisational matters need attention like:-

Where to meet

- ◆ Need for an office base
- ◆ Transport arrangements (and their cost) for meetings
- ◆ Contacts with potential member organisations

Different Roles of a Tenants Federation

There is no one model for how a federation should run. Federations adopt various ways of working to protect and further the interests of all tenants in a council or housing association area but most would include:

- ◆ Campaigning
- ◆ Negotiating with the council or housing association landlord and trying to influence it
- ◆ Circulating information to tenants through leaflets or newsletters
- ◆ Organising meetings and training for tenants on current housing issues
- ◆ Co-ordinating activities of local tenants' organisations so that they can act together with more strength than working alone

The Good Federation Guide

A federation should organise its' work in a way that will get its' agenda onto the table with the landlord(s) and get results for the area.

10 KEY POINTS

1. A federation needs to be democratic, with tenants and residents associations able to influence what the federation does and how it does it.
2. Have structures and methods in your organisation, which are not too bureaucratic. Welcome new members to join and participate. Make good use of your meetings,
3. Be careful not to let the federations' work be at the expense of local activity. A Federation will fail if it is not backed up by active democratic local groups,
4. Keep local groups informed of your activities and about any relevant information.
5. Ensure that it's the tenants' agenda that you are pursuing and not acting as a buffer for the landlord.
6. Be well organised and have clear and realistic aims. Encourage new members to join. Share tasks between all members. Remember that every group member has some skill/experience to offer.
7. By organising in an open and democratic manner your landlord(s) will be more prepared to listen to enable you to get your agenda onto the negotiating table.
8. Be prepared to take on a campaigning focus, if necessary
9. Link with other federations, national forums and organisations to share information and ideas.
10. Seek resources and practical support. To have any influence with the council the federation needs money for training, expenses, communicating with their members and so on.

What are you trying to achieve as a federation?

To organise effectively, a federation ought to plan ahead identifying the main things it wants to achieve. Perhaps thinking of about one year ahead is a reasonable period to plan for. The list below contains categories of things a federation might want to do. This might help you focus your thoughts.

Campaigning

Is there any issues your federation feels strongly about which you want to campaign on?

Negotiating

If you have reasonable access to the decision makers you want to influence, there may be some issues of concern you want to negotiate with your landlord or others about?

Sharing Information & Resources

Federations provide the chance for local associations to share information with each other. How could this be done?

As a federation you may want to pool resources to set up a service to members, e.g. photocopying

Sharing Knowledge & Experience

Are there things going on in some parts of your district that are worth letting others know about?

Co-ordinating Training & Information Gathering

It may be beyond the resources of local associations to plan training for tenants' representatives. It is quite common for federations to take on a co-ordinating role.

Helping New Associations Start Up

It would strengthen your federation if all local associations were members and all areas in your district had local associations. Can your federation do anything to work towards this level of representation?

If you are a relatively new federation there may be some basic organisational things you want to get sorted out.

How to achieve your aims

Once you have identified your aims the next step is to consider how to go about achieving them.

Some aims may be long term, some short term. If they are long term you should devise practical more immediate steps which take you towards your longer-term aims

Some activities you decide upon will be chosen to help you make your organisation more effective. This could relate to resources and training for example. Remember however, that doing things helps build the organisation's experience and therefore its capacity to achieve things.

- ◆ Look at the list of aims you have set yourselves
- ◆ Is it possible to list them in order of priority?
- ◆ Work out some steps you think could help you advance these aims. The Action Plan at Appendix 2 may assist you plan your steps
- ◆ Review the list of steps. Is there more than can reasonably be achieved? Should some desirable things be cut out meantime?

This list gives an idea of the resources that a well organised federation might need. It identifies the need for premises and staffing.

Resources

Premises

Rent
Council Tax
Water rates
Public Liability Insurance
Heating/Electricity
Repairs
Insurance
Telephones
Furniture
Computer equipment
Sundries (Cleaning materials etc)

Staff

Salaries
Pension
Employers National Insurance
Staff training budget

Travel

Staff, committee, delegates

Training budget

Staff, committee, delegates

Office costs

Internet
Stationery
Postage

Other costs

Creche and carer costs
Training courses
Subscriptions
Newsletters/leaflets
Research/information/publication
Legal fees
Audit fees

Any others you can think of add below...

Things that can go wrong

Running a federation is like most other activities, it seems easier to get it wrong than get it right. The following highlights examples of where things can go wrong to help you avoid these pitfalls.

1. Neglecting local associations
2. Failing to prioritise what you want to achieve and wasting time and effort
3. Lack of clarity about decisions being made and who is entitled to make them
4. Following the agenda of others at the expense of your own
5. Slack committee procedures/poor democracy
6. Accounting for money. For example: who decides on spending, who handles money, who keeps the books)
7. Dealing with a local “clash” of personalities and/or associations
8. Failing to agree on the place of owner occupiers with the Federation and/or local associations
9. The welcome given to new faces
10. Matching aims with skills and knowledge

Checklist for Federations

What follows is a checklist for Federations. This can be used to check different aspects of your organisation. You can use this list to assess different areas of your work and identify changes you might like to make or ways in which you would like to work.

1. RESOURCES

- Does your Federation have the resources it needs to carry out the work of the organisation?
- Does your Federation receive funding?
- Are local tenants and residents associations funded?
- What contribution, if any, do local associations make to the Federation?
- Does the Federation employ staff?
- Would the Federation like to employ staff or additional staff - if yes, what do you want to employ them for?
- Does the Federation have any other kind of support for example from Housing staff or other staff of the local authority?
- Does the Federation have an office base to work from?
- Does the Federation have administration support?
- Does the Federation have access to administrative facilities for example photocopier, computer?

2. TRAINING

- Does the Federation have access to training?
- Does the Federation organise its own training?
- Who selects the trainers?
- Does the Federation run training in central venues for the federation?
- Does the Federation run training for local groups in local areas?
- Does the Federation have a specific amount of money allocated for training, if yes, is it enough?

Checklist for Federations

3. EFFECTIVENESS

- What issues are you currently working on?
- Is the Federation struggling on some issues, are they organisational or in relation to working on issues?
- Does the Federation have objectives; are you achieving them?
- Why do you think it is important to have a Federation when you have local groups?
- How many groups are represented in the Federation?
- Are all areas represented?
- Is there a need for more local groups - is there support around for new groups starting up for example from housing department staff or community work staff?
- What kind of support does the Federation offer new groups?
- Does the Federation plan ahead: Does the Federation have plans for the future issues you want to tackle?
- Are there particular skills you would like to acquire to increase the effectiveness of the Federation?

4. ORGANISATION OF YOUR FEDERATION

- Structurally speaking, does the Federation work effectively?
- Do you find yourself attending meetings, which are unnecessarily long?
- Are decisions made in a democratic way within the Federation?
- Are decisions carried out by members?
- How does the Federation make policy?
- What communication links exist between your federation and local groups?
- Do organisational problems sometimes prevent the Federation from achieving objectives?
- Would changes help; if so which ones?

Appendix One – Model Constitution

Please Note:

This is a starting point for a federation constitution. Most federations have a constitution something like this. When considering it, remember to vary it to suit your own circumstances.

FEDERATION OF TENANTS AND RESIDENTS ASSOCIATIONS CONSTITUTION

1. Name

The name of the organisation shall be ***** Federation of
Tenants and Residents Associations, hereinafter referred to as “The Federation

2. Aims

The aims of the Federation are:

- a) To promote the rights of all tenants and residents in matters relating to repairs and maintenance, improvement of housing: conditions, amenities, and their environment
- b) To assist and encourage the setting up of tenants and residents associations in *****
- c) To assist and co-ordinate the efforts of member associations to help achieve common aims.
- d) To co-operate with other organisations on matters of common concern,
- e) To liaise and participate with ***** Council (**or Housing Association or both Council and Housing Association(s) (Insert as appropriate)**) and other authorities and agencies in pursuit of tenants and residents interests.
- f) To encourage community participation, spirit and enterprise in all areas relating to members interests.
- g) To uphold equal opportunities and to work for good relations among all members of the community, specifically prohibiting any conduct that discriminates or harasses on the grounds of race, religion, disability, political beliefs, gender or sexual orientation.
- h) To campaign for a rational and secure system of funding for the tenants and residents movement in ***** and throughout Scotland and to co-operate with other organisations to help achieve this common aim
- i) To publish and exchange information in furtherance of these aims.

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3. Membership

- A) Membership is open to all tenants and residents associations who apply and are accepted by the Executive Committee into membership.
- b) The Executive Committee shall accept all applications for membership satisfying the following criteria:
 - (i) The association operates within the area of ***** .
 - (ii) The association includes in its aims the promotion of the interests of tenants. irrespective of landlord,
 - (iii) The association has been democratically formed and operates under a democratic constitution,
 - (iv) The association, in all conduct of its affairs, prohibits discrimination or harassment on grounds of race, religion disability, political beliefs, gender or sexual orientation.
 - (v) The association supports the aims stated in the Federation’s constitution.
 - (vi) Payment is made of any annual membership fee resolved at an annual general meeting of the Federation.
- c) Membership is also open to individuals living in any area within ***** not covered by a constituted local tenants or residents association, The following rules will apply: -
 - (i) For the purposes of this constitution, individual members will be treated as if they all belonged to one member association, this includes eligibility to hold office be a member of the executive committee, where article 4d applies, or vote at general meetings, where article 5c applies, Articles 3b (v) & (vi) apply to individuals as well as to associations.
 - (ii) Where more than two individuals from the same locality apply to join the Federation, they will be encouraged by the Federation to set up a local association, In the interim granting of individual membership will be at the discretion of the Executive Committee.
- d) Member associations must agree to notify the Secretary of the Federation of any meeting called to dissolve the member association.
- e) Any member association finding themselves with problems or in difficulties may ask the Federation for advice or assistance.
- f) In the event that a group within an area covered by an existing association seeks membership of the Federation the following will apply:
 - (i) Where groups are of the view that division is in the best interest of their members, and agree that each shall cover a separate geographical area membership shall be granted, provided that the conditions of 3b are met.

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- (ii) Where groups are in agreement that the existing association shall act as a parent body to the new association(s), membership shall not be granted to the new association(s).
- (iii) Where there is a disagreement between the parties, the Federation shall bring them to arbitration to seek agreement. Failing agreement, the Federation reserves the right, at its discretion, to grant or withhold membership.
- (iv) In all instances, the decision of the Executive Committee will be final.

4. Executive Committee

- a) The Executive Committee shall be elected to manage the affairs of the Federation. The Executive Committee shall have authority to manage the business of the Federation, subject to any guidance from general meetings of the Federation
- b) This committee shall consist of a chairperson, vice chairperson, secretary, minute secretary, treasurer and a minimum of four general members.
- c) The committee shall give the office bearers every assistance to ensure the efficient functioning of the Federation
- d) No more than two members of the Executive Committee shall come from the same member association.
- e) The committee has the right to co-opt new members between AGMs to fill any general vacancies.
- f) Executive Committee members will inform the Secretary or Chairperson if they are unable, to attend any meeting and submit reasons for non-attendance. At the discretion of the Executive Committee, any committee member missing three consecutive meetings will be deemed to have resigned and the vacancy will be filled as per section 4 f) above.
- g) A quorum of the committee shall be three.
- h) The chair of the meeting can exercise a casting vote only.
- j) Minutes including the names of all those in attendance, shall be taken of all Executive Committee meetings.
- k) The committee shall be empowered to suspend or expel any individual member or member organisation whose representative(s) contravenes any article of the Federation's constitution. Such action can be appealed within 14 days writing to the secretary. A special general meeting of the Federation, called within one calendar month of receipt of the appeal shall hear the appeal and its decision shall be final-

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5. Meetings of the Federation

- a) At least five meetings of the Federation in addition to the annual general meeting, shall be called each year.
- b) The quorum of all Federation general meetings, including special general meetings and the annual general meeting, shall be at least one representative from not less than one third of member associations. All decisions shall be taken by a simple majority of those present entitled to vote, unless indicated otherwise below.
- c) There shall be no restriction on the number of delegates attending meetings of the Federation from any member association, but each member association shall be entitled to two voting delegates only. The chair of the meeting shall be given prior notification of the names of the voting delegates. Attendance at meetings of the Federation of any persons, other than the delegates of member associations and individual members, must only be by invitation of a general meeting or at the discretion of the Executive Committee.
- d) The chair of the meeting is not to be counted as a voting delegate and can exercise a casting vote only. The association of which he/she is a member will be entitled to the number of voting delegates specified at 5 (c) above.
- e) Only delegates who are themselves council tenants, whether individuals or representatives of associations, may vote on issues which relate specifically to tenants of*****8.
- f) Special General Meetings may be called either by the Executive Committee. or at the request of not .less than three member associations, submitting such a request in writing to the Secretary. A special general meeting must be called within one calendar month of the date of receipt of such a request. Notice of a special general meeting must be issued to all member associations and individual members at least 14 days before the meeting date, indicating the subject matter. No business can be conducted at a special general meeting unless indicated in this notice
- g) Sub-committees other than the Executive Committee can be appointed at meetings of the Federation or by the Executive Committee in pursuit of the efficient functioning of the Federation The terms of reference of such committees must be clearly stated in the minute of the meeting establishing them. The Secretary and the Chairperson of the Federation shall be entitled to attend all such sub-committee meetings. The Executive Committee can disband any sub committees it appointed. Meetings of the Federation can decide to disband any sub-committees, whether appointed by the Federation or by the Executive Committee.

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6. Annual General Meeting (AGM)

- a) No later than 15 months from the date of the inaugural general meeting or the last annual general meeting, an annual general meeting shall be held.
- b) Notice of the AGM must be issued to member associations and individual members at least one calendar month before the meeting date.
- c) The purpose of the AGM shall be:
 - (i) to receive a report from the Executive Committee on the Federation's affairs and activities over the preceding year;
 - (ii) to receive the audited accounts of the Federation for the preceding financial year;
 - (iii) to appoint an auditor for the ensuing year;
 - (iv) to debate and vote on proposed amendments to the constitution;
 - (v) to debate and vote on any competent proposals put to the meeting by the Executive Committee or member associations;
 - (vi) to require all office bearers and Executive Committee members to vacate their positions, and elect new office bearers and Executive Committee members to serve for the ensuing year.
- d) Nominations for committee members will be made and seconded on nomination forms. These must be with the Secretary prior to the start of the AGM. Nominations may be made from the floor to complete committee numbers.
 - (i) Nominations will be voted on by the floor
 - (ii) The new committee will elect from their number the Chairperson, Vice-Chair, Secretary, Minute Secretary and Treasurer
- e) Amendments to the constitution for consideration at the AGM must be submitted to the Secretary in writing fourteen days before the meeting date. Member associations and individual members must be issued with a copy of the proposed amendments at least seven days before the meeting date. Amendments to the constitution are decided by a two-thirds majority of those present and entitled to vote.
- f) Other proposals for consideration at the AGM must be notified to the Secretary, in writing, at least fourteen days before the meeting date. Amendments to these proposals may be taken at the meeting.
- g) Minutes of the AGM, including the names of all those attending shall be taken.

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7. Finance

- a) All monies raised by or on behalf of the Federation, or granted to the Federation shall be applied to further the aims of the Federation and for no other purpose.
- b) The Federation must operate its financial affairs through a bank account, two out of the following four office bearers - treasurer, chairperson, vice-chairperson and secretary must sign all cheques.
- c) The Treasurer must:
 - (i) keep accounts of all Federation income and expenditure:
 - (ii) make available to each general meeting an up-to-date balance.
 - (iii) produce a financial report summarising accumulated income and expenditure, together with the balance from the latest bank statement at each Executive Committee meeting and on request to the next general meeting.
 - (iv) submit the annual accounts for audit by the external auditor.
- d) The Treasurer is authorised to pay, by cheque, travel and other expenses of representatives of the Federation undertaking Federation business. All such claims must be on the appropriate claim form and be accompanied by receipts. Each recipient of such expenses must sign for each payment made. The Treasurer must submit to the Executive Committee a list of the recipients of such expenses, showing amounts received, on a quarterly basis.
- e) The Executive Committee is authorised to spend monies belonging to the Federation in pursuit of its aims.
- f) The Executive Committee is authorised to ask the auditor to examine the financial affairs of the Federation at any time.

8. Federation Delegates

- a) The Executive Committee and general meetings are each authorised to elect delegates to conferences and other events relevant to the aims of the Federation. No authorisations can be made without prior knowledge of the approximate costs involved and the Federation's current financial position.
- b) The Executive Committee or with its agreement members of the Executive Committee are authorised to represent the Federation in all aspects of the pursuit of its aims. General meetings may also elect delegates to represent the Federation on specific local or national bodies.
 - (i) Only delegates who are also tenants of ***** Council may represent the Federation at any meeting or on any liaison body involving ***** Council discussing matters specific to council tenants.

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- ii) No person, out with the Executive Committee shall speak or correspond on Federation business without the authority of the Executive Committee or a general meeting,
- c) General meetings are authorised to elect delegates to serve on local or national 'bodies concerned with the advance of tenants' interests.

9. Changes to the Constitution

- a) This constitution may only be altered by an amendment proposed at an annual general meeting according to article 6e above.

10. Dissolution

- a) The Federation may only be dissolved at an extraordinary general meeting called for that purpose by the Executive Committee or at the request of not less than three member associations.
- b) Dissolution requires a two-thirds majority of those present and entitled to vote at such a meeting.
- c) Notice of an extraordinary general meeting to dissolve the Federation must be issued to all member associations individual members and national bodies of which the Federation is a member, at least two calendar months before the date of the meeting, with the purpose of the meeting clearly indicated. The meeting must also be advertised in a public newspaper having a wide circulation in the ***** area at least fourteen days before the date of the meeting.
- d) In the event of dissolution, remaining assets after outstanding liabilities are met shall be disbursed in a manner agreed among the last appointed office bearers of the Federation in consultation with representatives of ***** Council (or Housing Association or both)(Insert as appropriate). Disbursement of any remaining assets should if possible be to an organisation or organisations with aims closely related to the Federation.
- f) The same persons shall decide what happens to all documents belonging to the Federation, having regard to their value to the tenants' and residents' movement.

Appendix Two – Model Action Plan

TASK	METHOD	PARTICIPANTS	TIMESCALE	REVIEW
				September 2002
				September 2002
				September 2002
				September 2002
				September 2002

Federations throughout Scotland – Contact details

South Aberdeenshire Tenants & Residents Association

1 Highfield Court
Stonehaven
Aberdeenshire
Ab39 2PL

Clackmannanshire Tenants & Residents Federation

Alloa Business Centre
Whins Road
Alloa
FK10 3SA
Tel: 01259 722 718

Coatbridge Federation

Unit 66 Fountian Business centre
Ellis Street
Coatbridge
ML5 3AA
Tel: 01236 435844

East Fife Federation of Tenants and Residents Association

G3 Granary Business Center
Coal Road
Cupar
KY15 5YQ
Tel: 0131 556 4406

Edinburgh Tenants Federation

53 Blackfriars Street
Edinburgh
EH1 1NB
Tel: 0131 556 4406

East Lothian Tenants & Residents Panel

47 Bridge Street
Musselburgh
EH21 6AA
Tel: 0131 665 9304

East Renfrewshire Tenants & Residents Federation

C/O 24 Crossmill Avenue
Barrhead
G78

Fife Federation of Tenants and Residents Association

38b Hunters Street
Kirkcaldy
KY11 1ED

Dumfries & Galloway Tenants & Residents Federation

28 Akers Avenue
Locharbriggs
Dumfries
DG1 1UQ

Dundee Federation of Tenants' Associations

Number 10
10 Constitution Road
Dundee
DD1 1LL
Tel: 01382 305 718

Federation of Inverclyde Tenants & Residents Associations

19-21 Lyndoch Street
Greenock
PA 15 4AB
Tel: 01475 806003
Email: info@fitra.co.uk

Glenrothes Tenants & Residents Federation

Unit 6 Edison House
Fullerton Road
Glenrothes
KY6 1EB
Tel: 01592 611 139

Federations throughout Scotland – Contact details

North Lanarkshire Tenants & Residents Federation

Unit 66, Fountain Business Centre
Ellis Street
Coatbridge
MI5 3AA
Tel: 01236 435844

Perth & Kinross Tenants & Residents Federation

20 North Methven Street
Perth
PH1 5PN
Tel: 01738 442 302
Email: sec@pktenants.org

Stirling Tenants Assembly

17 Raploch Road
Raploch
Stirling
FK8 1TH

Scottish Tenants Organisation

John Carracher
Tel: 01698 281 488
www.scottishtenants.org.uk



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