

Tenants' and Residents' Associations and the Gold Standard Award



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
**KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA**

www.rbkc.gov.uk/community

What are Tenants' and Residents' Associations?

Tenants' and Residents' Associations in the Borough

The Royal Borough is home to over 300 residents' groups, a higher than average number for a local authority. These groups are primarily tenants' and residents' associations (TRAs), ranging from social housing estates to private mansion blocks, and representing a strong and important resident voice in the borough.

The term 'residents' group' is used to describe the range of groups or societies into which residents can organise themselves, for example Neighbourhood Watch or campaigning groups. By definition, a TRA is made up of people who specifically live within its defined catchment area, rather than people with an interest in that area (such as a Friends group) or in a wider-ranging issue (such as poverty or old age). So whilst a TRA is a residents' group, a residents' group is not necessarily a TRA. As such, TRAs are location based community groups which play a crucial part in grassroots organising and place-based approaches to community engagement.

TRAs encourage and facilitate civic involvement and community spirit by providing an important opportunity for residents to engage with one another and influence decision making in a meaningful way. As a result, TRAs are some of the Council's most important organised community stakeholders.

How does the Council engage with TRAs?

TRAs and the Council

Different local authorities engage with their TRAs in very different ways. In Kensington and Chelsea, because there are so many TRAs and because they are so active, the relationship is one of recognition and support.

The Community Engagement Team maintains a database of all TRAs in the borough, allowing us to notify them of, and consult them on, relevant planning applications or other Council activity which might affect them and their members. This direct line of communication connects the Council with the community, enabling residents to voice their opinions and concerns in an organised and inclusive way.

The Community Engagement Team also provides dedicated support to both established and developing TRAs, as well as to residents interested in starting a TRA from scratch. The Community Engagement Team brokers relationships between TRAs, Council services and other community groups, as well as offering bespoke guidance on issues from governance to communications. In this way, the Council is able to maintain mutually beneficial, constructive relationships with the borough's diverse associations.

Gold Standard Award

Because TRAs so often sit at the heart of their surrounding communities, and because we know that there are many excellent associations in Kensington and Chelsea, the Council launched its Tenants' and Residents' Association Gold Standard Award in 2008.

The scheme was created to support all types of TRAs in the borough, from highly organised, semi-professional associations with yearly audited accounts to those consisting of only one or two members who've not met for years. The Gold Standard Award is a means of recognising and rewarding well-run TRAs and legitimising their voice in the community. It also provides a mechanism of support for interested TRAs to improve through sharing and encouraging best practice.

When awarded the Gold Standard, TRAs receive the following benefits:

- A one-off grant of £500
- Recognition at an annual Gold Standard event in the Mayor's Parlour
- Recommendations to Councillors and encouragement that Councillors attend the association's AGM
- A logo to be used and a certificate to display as a mark of quality
- Access to decision makers and opportunities to join borough-wide strategic bodies

In order to achieve the Gold Standard, TRAs must meet a series of criteria which reflect good governance, clear objectives and extensive community inclusion. These criteria were set in a detailed consultation process with a series of the borough's TRAs and fall into four categories:

- **Constitution**
- **Membership**
- **Meetings**
- **Communication and consultation**

Review

In consultation with the Cabinet Member for Voluntary Organisations and Resident Engagement, a review is currently being undertaken by Community Engagement officers to identify improvements in taking the Gold Standard Award scheme forward.

How can I get started?

Here are some practical steps you can take to start building your relationships with the borough's TRAs:

- Speak to the Community Engagement Team to learn more about Kensington and Chelsea's TRAs and their interactions with the Council;
- If you are a newly elected Councillor, write to the chairs of your local TRAs to introduce yourself;
- Attend the Annual General Meeting of a Gold Standard TRA;
- With help from the Community Engagement Team, use the TRA database to take stock of the non-Gold Standard TRAs in your ward and encourage them to apply for the Gold Standard Award;

For more information, or to see some of the practical resources provided for TRAs, visit the Gold Standard pages of the Community Engagement website.