

Setting up a Tenants Action Group

Who is with me?

Dealing with disrepair or concerns about your flat may feel stressful and isolating, particularly if your landlord is not responding positively, or not taking appropriate action. It can feel like you're on your own - but your neighbours may well be dealing with the same problems too.

Issues that affect multi-occupancy residential buildings are usually common problems. Things like damp, mould, pests, asbestos, leaks, fire or structural problems are not usually confined to just one flat.

The first step to organising within your community is to get residents talking about the problems.

You could try:

- Striking up conversation about a particular problem when you bump into your neighbours.
- Knocking on doors to survey residents in your block to find out how many are affected by the problem.
- Putting up a poster on a community noticeboard asking 'does your flat suffer with XYZ?' Include details of how other residents can get in touch with you.

Try to get an understanding of how your neighbours feel about the issue, are they affected too? Have they reported it? What action did the landlord take in their case? Are they feeling frustrated about these problems too? Could it be time to set up a tenant action group?

How do we do this?

Once you've established that you're not alone and your neighbours are going through the same problems, then it's time to think about the next steps towards taking action as a group. Think about what your goals are and what you want to achieve.

You could try:

- Calling a residents meeting to discuss the issues. This is an opportunity to exchange details, share stories and experiences, decide upon a way of communicating and thinking about a course of action.

Practical things to consider:

- Do you have access to a community room or space to hold your meeting? If not - you could ask a nearby community centre if they might let you use their space for free. Or you could even consider inviting residents to simply meet outside the building if there's an appropriate space and the weather is agreeable.
- Do you have access to printing facilities to create enough copies of your meeting invitation to post through each letterbox? If not, you could design a couple of posters by hand and stick them onto notice-boards, or in prominent communal areas.
- What equipment will you need for your meeting? Will there be at least a few chairs for people less able to stand? Can you bring a flipchart or large pieces of paper and ask someone to help by writing down discussion points and responses?
Consider bringing a clipboard, paper and pen to pass around and ask people to leave their name, address, contact details and any comments or suggestions. If you expect a large turnout, you might need a microphone or a megaphone - is there one you can borrow? If not, try asking at your local community centre or resource hub if they could loan you one. Or contact other campaign organisations like [unions](#) or [housing campaigns](#) in your area to find out if they can attend and lend their equipment and expertise.

How do we stay in touch after our first meeting?

- You could set up a Whatsapp group
- You could set up a Facebook page
- You could arrange regular further meetings

Remember - some residents may not be online. You could consider installing a communal postbox to communicate with those residents in writing and to keep them updated.

Information exchange/ Collecting evidence

Ask residents to share and exchange their stories and experiences. These will prove useful in whatever course of action you decide upon next.

Course of Action

As a group, agree upon your goals and which routes to take to achieve them. Consider your strategy, tactics and the various tasks that will need to be fulfilled along the journey. Residents may wish to put themselves forward to carry out a particular role like leafleting or speaking to the media.

You could try:

- Petitioning your landlord. Write a group letter asking your landlord to fix the problem and try to get as many resident signatories as possible.
- Contacting your local news outlet to see if they will run a story about the problem. You could invite a reporter to your estate to meet with and interview a few residents.
- Setting up a social media account e.g Twitter to highlight the problem and share images and stories about what's going on.
- Contacting your [local councillors or your local MP](#) for help. However, this can be more difficult if your landlord is the local council. In this case, you could apply to make a [deputation](#) directly to the council members. (Check your local council website to find out what the processes are in your area for formally addressing members of the council.)
- Getting legal advice. Find out if there's a [Law Centre](#) or [Citizen's Advice Bureau](#) in your area. They will be able to recommend local solicitors who may consider taking on your case.