

The background of the cover features a photograph of a modern, multi-story apartment building with a mix of grey and green facades. In the foreground, there is a landscaped area with a pond, green lawn, and trees. The image is overlaid with a large green semi-transparent oval that frames the title text. There are also smaller, semi-transparent circular overlays in orange and yellow at the bottom of the image.

Residents' association toolkit

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1 About Notting Hill Genesis and resident involvement

Created in 2018 from two well-established housing associations, Notting Hill Genesis is now one of the largest housing associations in London and the south-east. We own and manage more than 66,000 homes and employ around 2,000 staff. We provide homes across a range of tenures and are committed to continuing to deliver housing that is affordable to all.

Our residents are at the heart of everything we do. Residents range from tenants to homeowners with a diverse mix of social and economic backgrounds, and their feedback on the services they receive is integral in enabling us to improve. Our Resident Involvement mission statement says:

“Resident involvement will enable residents’ voices to be heard. We will create a range of accessible opportunities for staff and residents to work together, build trust, and improve services”.

Resident feedback is an essential part of our Resident Involvement offer and Notting Hill Genesis places great emphasis on the views of local groups including Residents’ Associations (RAs).

This information pack will provide you with useful advice and guidance on how to set up and run an RA. This document should be treated as a guide and while there are certain requirements Notting Hill Genesis have to recognise RAs, the running of your RA should be what works best for you.

2 What is a residents' association?

A Notting Hill Genesis Residents Association (RA) is defined as a group made up of local residents living in a particular estate, building or area. It plays a part in dealing with problems at a local level, as well as organising activities such as social events and finding ways of improving the local area. They represent the views of their membership and local residents to their landlord, the local authority and any other relevant agencies.

A properly organised association will need to have:

- A properly organised association will need to have:
- A constitution
- A committee
- A representative membership
- Meeting agendas
- Notes of meetings
- An Annual General meeting

Membership should be open to all residents over the age of 18 and should not discriminate against members of the community because of race, age, sex, disability, sexuality, religion or background.

Membership should be open to all tenure types living in the defined area, with membership reaching over 50% within one year of setting up (i.e., over 50% of households in the defined area express permission for the RA to represent them where they live). They do not necessarily have to be directly involved but are receiving updates and have the opportunity to provide feedback to the committee directly.

Residents Associations do not have the legal right to the access of personal information of other residents in any circumstances. This type of information can be requested from residents and provided only if permission is given.

3 Why set up a residents' association?

RAs can get involved in a range of activities. These include:

- Organising social, leisure or educational activities for your estate, building or area
- Helping to promote estate or area-based activities such as estate inspections
- Campaigning for something (e.g. a better repairs service, play facilities, somewhere to meet etc.)
- Campaigning against something (e.g. the closure of local facilities, problems with traffic)
- Gaining a greater voice than you would have as an individual, when talking to the council or landlord about things you would like to see changed
- Gaining or supporting a sense of 'community', by meeting and helping other people
- Having more influence and being able to organise community activities such as street parties, youth activities etc.
- Keeping people in your estate, building or area informed of all the issues that affect them
- Harnessing and developing the organisational skills and other talents of community members

Is a Residents' Association the best way forward?

You may wish to consider whether setting up an RA is the best way to involve your local community. If there is a problem you are looking to resolve or a particular topic you want to cover, you may want to try:

- A one-off meeting with your housing team to discuss a particular issue where you live
- A regular opportunity to join your housing team on an estate inspection
- Joining other existing community groups (particularly where interest for an RA may be low)

4 Benefits of registration and recognition

RAs can register (or form) themselves with Notting Hill Genesis. The benefits of this are:

- An initial set-up grant of £350
- Support from the Resident Involvement team with any queries about running your RA and fulfilling your requirements for membership
- Support from Housing teams to solve any issues you are focussing on.
- Training for committee members to help them fulfil their roles (for example, how to run chair meetings).
- Networking opportunities with other RAs (Resident Involvement will occasionally organise meetings for you to share best practice)
- Being kept informed about other Involvement opportunities and ensure feedback from your meetings is shared with other panels and forums.

In order for your RA to be formally recognised by Notting Hill Genesis, we need to be sure that the RA is representative of all residents, that it is accountable and democratically elected.

Registering your Residents' Association

To be a registered RA, you will need to have:

- Demonstrated you have obtained or made steps to obtain wider support from residents in the estate, building or area you will represent (for example through sign ups or meeting attendance).
- A defined area the RA aims to represent with open membership to all residents of all tenures.
- A signed constitution approved by the Resident Involvement team
- An elected committee in place
- A bank account in the name of your RA

Achieving formal recognition

All RA's must be formally recognised within one year of registration. Residents'

Associations that are formally recognised by their landlord for the purposes of section 29 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 acquire additional rights in law. This includes the right to:

- Request information about service charge costs
- Be consulted on appointments of managing agents
- Be notified by us of any upcoming major works

In order to be recognised you will need to provide evidence of the following on a yearly basis to the Resident Involvement team:

- Open financial records (with an annual account summary)
- Minutes from meetings including an annual general meeting (AGM), to record actions agreed and decisions taken, and any key issues.
- A completed form after each AGM of any changes to your committee or constitution
- Ways to make sure all residents are aware of the RA and are encouraged to get involved.
- Open membership to all residents and proof of membership and size of RA to be shared each year (over 50% membership after a year).

Evidencing Membership

We ask that all RA's must demonstrate after a year that their membership of the RA exceeds 50% of the residents in their defined area.

As mentioned above, 'membership' is defined as households who give permission for the RA to represent them. They do not necessarily have to attend meetings. Alternatively, the RA could demonstrate that it represents 60% of variable service charge payers. Following evidence of this, the RA will be granted formal recognition. They are also able to apply for a yearly grant of £300.

Proof of membership must be provided each year, following the RA's AGM. Examples of proving membership include a list of names and signatures or responses to surveys requesting interest (these can be paper or online and include emails and first line of address)

If an RA is unable to show proof of membership or provide the additional paperwork after one year of registration, they will not be given formal recognition and will no longer be a registered association. Any remaining grant money will need to be returned to the Resident Involvement Team, who will be on hand to support residents to resolve any remaining issues, working alongside your local housing team.

5 How to set up a residents' association

Step 1



Deciding the purpose of your RA

Outline clear aims at the beginning to give your association a definite purpose.

Step 2



Getting people's views

Speak to your neighbours and friends through informal conversations, simple sign-up sheets, round robin emails, social media.

Step 3



Initial meeting

Advertise through word of mouth, letters posters, texts/emails, social media groups.

Step 4



Voting in your committee

You would need to vote for the Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and ad-hoc committee members if desired.

Step 5



Adopting a constitution

The constitution clarifies who the RA represents, what the RA is about and how it is run.

Step 6



Open a bank account

Step 7



Formal registration

Step 8



Hold first formal meeting

Step 9



Formal recognition

Following AGM and over 50% membership

Step 1: Deciding the purpose of your RA

Outlining clear aims at the beginning will give your association a definite purpose. RAs are normally set up in response to a problem or an issue in the area, but make sure that you also have a long-term vision for your association too. These can be tested later with your members.

Step 2: Getting people's views

Once you have a clear idea of why an association is needed, it is important that you make sure other residents in your area feel the same. Here are a few tips to help you find out how much support there is for the idea:

- Speak to your neighbours and friends to get their views and swap ideas
- Encourage them to talk to their neighbours and seek their support. There are several ways to do this, such as:
 - » Informal conversations
 - » Simple sign-up sheets
 - » Round robin emails
 - » Social media
- Issue a survey. Asking your neighbours to fill out a survey might help gather support and ideas on what the focus of the RA could be. Resident Involvement have provided a sample survey for you to adopt and amend as you see fit.
- Please be sure to handle any personal data you may collect in the correct manner as per the GDPR guidelines.
- Tell people about the benefits of being a formally recognised RA.
- Be prepared to listen to other people's ideas. Ask people to suggest other solutions in the survey.
- The survey can be one way you can ascertain interest in setting up an RA.
- It can be an important method to gain sign ups, get ideas about the most common issues in the area and gauge opinion if an RA would be useful where you live. You can leave copies on noticeboards, ask your housing officer to send around electronically, or enlist volunteers to conduct door knocking.

In getting your RA constituted, you need to have formed a dedicated committee. We recognise it can take time to build a membership, but you will need to have shown to have taken steps to enlist support from residents. When engaging with Notting Hill Genesis, it is important for the housing team to know that your RA is a representative group which is why we would like to see membership at 50% plus after a year.

Step 3: Initial meeting

Should the results of your survey and conversations indicate appetite for an RA, contact your Housing Officer/ Property Management Officer to inform them about the level of interest you have in forming an RA. You may wish to seek their assistance in setting up an initial informal public meeting.

Organising a meeting will help to find out if there is a wider interest in forming an RA and, if so, to encourage people to be part of the committee, who are responsible for establishing the RA. You may wish to invite a member of the Resident Involvement team to this meeting to give guidance and to answer any RA-specific questions. It is also a good idea to invite your local officer. Please provide NHG staff with at least two weeks' notice of the meeting (please see the good practice guide/ constitution). If you need help securing a space to hold these initial meetings ask your local officer to assist you.

It is important to make sure that the meeting is well advertised. Please ensure that all residents from your estate, block or street are invited to the meeting. Some ideas to do this are:

- Word of mouth – some door knocking to encourage attendance
- Letters – your housing officer can help send invitations to all residents
- Posters – your housing officer can help you put posters up on noticeboards. Let them know if you need help with design or print.
- Text/email – ask your housing officer to send info electronically
- Utilising any social media groups that already exist for your area

When you organise this meeting, think about the following:

- Date of meeting – avoid dates that coincide with other major dates e.g. religious festivals, holiday season etc.
- Time of meeting - make consideration for residents who work or have other commitments.
- Venue - is it accessible for residents with disabilities? Is it near to where you live? How much will it cost? Does it have the right facilities (e.g. chairs, tables, kettle for making hot drinks)? What are the getting in and locking up arrangements? If you wish to hire a venue that costs money, please let us know. We may be able to help you with the cost or we may be able to find somewhere that is more suitable. You may be living near a Notting Hill Genesis community centre or office which will be free to use. You may wish to conduct your meeting online (E.g. Zoom or MS Teams).
- Will parents be able to bring their children to the meeting? If so, is there a play area for children or a crèche at the venue?
- Do you want to provide refreshments at the meeting?

If you spend any money, keep receipts, as you may be able to claim this back later should you RA obtain it's grant money. At this informal meeting, which should last about an hour, the following should be discussed:

- What are the key issues in your estate, building or area?
- Is there a need for an RA? If so, why?
- Who would like to be on the committee? Explain that the purpose of the committee is to take things forward to establish the RA. Ideally, you will want four to six people.

The decision whether to set up a RA will normally be taken at this meeting. Write minutes for future reference. The notes could help you with defining the RA's aims and objectives.

Step 4: Voting in your committee:

Depending on how advanced your conversations have been, you may look to use this initial public meeting to vote for your committee (Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and ad-hoc committee members if desired). You can ask attendees to declare their interest prior to the meeting. You may wish to allow each candidate to say a few words before casting your votes. See the good practice guide on how to conduct a vote at the end.

See 'Appendix 1 – The Roles of the Committee' for information on each role.

Step 5: Adopting a constitution

A constitution is a written statement of the aims, objectives, and rules of a RA. The 'aims' are what you want to achieve whilst the 'objectives' set out how these aims will be achieved. In short, the constitution clarifies who the RA represents, what the RA is about and how it is run. A constitution states, amongst other things:

- The area your RA covers (name of estate, block or streets)
- Its membership
- Roles of the committee
- Rules governing meetings

Notting Hill Genesis requires RAs to have a constitution. The constitution must first be approved the Resident Involvement Team before the RA can be registered.

A model [constitution](#) is available on the [Resident Involvement webpage](#). If however, you wish to adopt your own constitution the following items must be included in the document:

- Name of the RA.

- Area of benefit - the name of the estate, block or streets covered by RA.
- Aims and Objectives - what the RA wants to achieve and how it will go about doing this.
- Membership - the RA should be representative of the estate, building or area which it serves, and in a mixed tenure (rented and leasehold) development, the constitution should not favour a particular tenure. All residents must opt in to become a member.
- The committee – they are responsible for managing the day-to-day affairs of your RA and are elected at the AGM. Elections for committees should be fair, democratic and inclusive

The Constitution must state:

- How many members may constitute a committee
- The duties of committee members and executive post-holders
- That the committee is elected annually
- How often the committee will meet:
 - » AGM – this is a meeting where the committee reports on the activities of the previous year, then stands down. You will have to decide how long committee members may hold office. You may wish to include a clause in the constitution to the effect that a position cannot be held for more than three years.
 - » Other committee meetings and general meetings – how often will these be held and how will they be organised?
 - » Quorum – this indicates the minimum number of members required for a meeting to go ahead and make decisions. This eliminates the possibility of one or two people making decisions. A balance should be struck between a quorum being unachievable and a quorum that is undemocratic. For the AGM and committee meetings we suggest a 50% quorum.
 - » Conduct – this outlines the acceptable behaviour expected from people who attend meetings. It should also state the action that may be taken to exclude those that breach these rules.
- Changes to the Constitution – this outlines the procedure for altering the constitution. Please note that any changes to the constitution must be approved by the Involvement Team.
- Equal opportunities and monitoring – Notting Hill Genesis requires all RAs to ensure that everyone no matter their nationality, disability, ethnicity, faith, sexuality, gender or age are given every opportunity to participate at committee level and at general meetings.

6 Running your residents' association

Meetings

Now you are officially constituted, you can begin to organise your RA meetings. Most RAs meet at least four times a year (including their AGM – annual general meetings) but this can be decided by your committee.

See 'Appendix 2 – Types of meetings' for information on AGMs, Committee meetings, General meetings and Virtual meetings.

The role of the observer

Observers may be invited to attend meetings where it is considered that their presence would be of advantage. Observers will usually be invited for the following reasons:

- The RA may wish to invite a person as an observer where that person represents a group or organisation with a particular interest/knowledge concerning an item to be discussed at that meeting
- Most likely, this could be a representative from Notting Hill Genesis or an external representative such as a local councillor, MP or Safer Neighbourhoods Team.

Observers are not RA members and cannot participate as full members at a meeting. They do not have voting rights on any issues and they should not raise their personal issues during the meeting.

If you wish to have Notting Hill Genesis representation, please allow plenty of notice so we can ensure someone can attend. Further advice and more hints and tips on running meetings are available in the good practice guide.

Finance

This is the responsibility of the Treasurer who will have to account for the finances at the AGM. The following criteria need to be met:

- All monies raised must be used to further the aims of the RA only
- All funds shall be kept in a bank account in the name of the RA
- All expenditure must be agreed and controlled by the committee.
- Signatories should include the Treasurer and Chair.
- No RA member may sign a blank cheque

- Audited accounts must be presented at the AGM and a statement of account at all general meetings. These must also be shared with the Resident Involvement Team.
- The financial year runs from the 1 April to 31 March

AGM form and keeping us informed

All RA's must hold AGMs as per their constitution. Regardless whether you are applying for the annual grant, all RAs are required to evidence proof of existence each year. Failure to do so may result in your RA no longer being formally recognised by NHG.

Dissolution of the RA

This happens when the RA is no longer deemed to be functional nor has no further need to exist. The following procedure will need to take place:

- A two-thirds vote for the dissolution of the RA is required. This can be taken at an AGM or special general meeting. Members must be informed 21 days before the meeting as to the purpose of the meeting

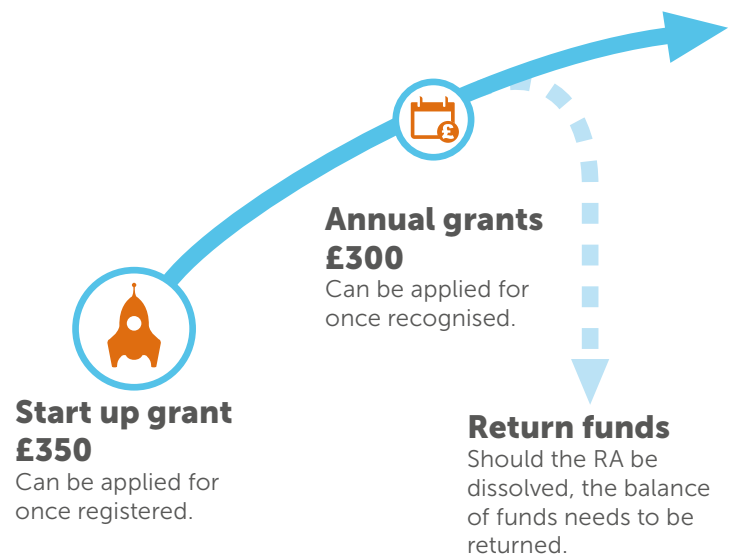
OR

- A signed declaration from all committee members with explanation for why the RA is dissolving
- Any money or equipment must be handed back to the funding bodies
- Any bank accounts must be closed

Please note the Resident Involvement team reserves the right to dissolve any RAs which have not made contact after 12 months. We will always make several attempts to contact the RA and its committee members before making any decisions to dissolve the RA. **All RA's must provide proof of existence each year following their AGM.**

7 Grants

Registered RAs can claim a start-up grant and once recognised can claim an annual grant from Notting Hill Genesis to meet costs associated with running the group. The grant can only be spent on things which support the group to meet its stated aims and objectives. The grant should not be used for making repairs, improvements or legal costs.



Examples of how funding can be used (See 'Appendix 3 – Grant Information' for more details on the grants available):

- Meeting space hire
- Stationery (e.g. pens, account books, envelopes, paper)
- Photocopying
- Postage costs
- Equipment hire costs
- Subscription fees (fees that need to be paid to join another organisation, such as the Tenant Participation Advisory Service or for software such as Zoom)
- Refreshment costs
- Travelling expenses (for attending meetings in other areas on behalf of the association)
- Special requirements (e.g. childcare, crèche, translators)
- Towards a community event (receipts must be presented)

Appendix 1 – The role of the committee

The role of the Chair (Officer)

The role of the Chair is to ensure the efficient running of committee meetings and to be the spokesperson for the group. The role can be divided into a Chair and Vice Chair position, as well as rotating the position to give everybody experience.

The Chairperson's duties:

- Take responsibility for the smooth running of the association including setting annual aims and reviewing the past year;
- Keep in regular contact with the local officer
- Prepare the agenda with the Secretary;
- Ensure meetings start on time and that new people are welcomed. Everyone should be introduced including the guest speakers; and
- Introduce each agenda item explaining some background and what decisions need to be made.

During the meeting the chair should ensure:

- Everybody is encouraged to contribute to discussions;
- Order is kept;
- No member dominates the discussion;
- Any jargon used is explained; and
- Decisions are made and understood.
- At the end of each item, summarise the main points and outline actions that need to be taken.
- At the end of a meeting, set a date, time and place for the next meeting. Thank everyone for attending.

A Chairperson should not:

- Take on all the work. Responsibilities should be delegated and others should be encouraged to take part;
- Express any view that have not been previously discussed by the Committee, as the Chair can often be asked to represent the views of the Committee and RA to external agencies; and
- Dominate meetings. They should maintain control but allow flexibility and

encourage everyone to participate whilst ensuring time is used effectively.

The role of vice chair (Officer) (optional)

- The Vice-Chair can share the workload with the chair and deputises for the chair in his or her absence
- Often the chair and secretary will determine the exact role of the Vice chair.
- This is good practice, but if there is a lack of volunteers for committee positions, then Vice Chair can be something you can do without or recruit to later on.

The role of the Secretary (Officer)

The role of the Secretary involves organisational and administrative duties for the committee. The amount of work for the secretary can vary so in some cases it may be better to split the job up e.g. Minute Secretary, Membership Secretary.

The Secretary's duties:

- Prepare the agenda with the Chair;
- Organise and publicise meetings/events;
- Receive agenda items, preparing and distributing the agendas and minutes;
- Record minutes or bullet point notes at meetings; and
- Produce newsletters/posters for residents

During the meeting:

- Take apologies, agree minutes of last meeting;
- Record matters arising and present any correspondence to the Committee;
- Record discussion of meeting as simply as possible; and
- Record any decisions accurately Other responsibilities to include:
 - Writing and receiving letters on behalf of the group;
 - Be the first point of contact for other organisations;
 - Keep an up-to-date record of Committee members' details; and
 - Provide copies of minutes when requested

The role of the Treasurer (Officer)

The Treasurer has the overall responsibility of the Committee's finances. The Treasurer has a central role on the Committee. It is critical to the group's plans for the future, and ongoing costs. The amount of work is dependent on how much money the RA deals with.

The Treasurer's duties:

- Open and maintain a bank or building society account in the name of the Residents Association;
- Keep accurate books of all financial transactions with receipts and invoices;
- Prepare regular financial reports for the Committee;
- Prepare the books for an annual audit or verification to be presented at the AGM;
- Allow, upon reasonable notification, any member to inspect the account books; and
- Apply for any grants.

Other support

- The Treasurer advises the Committee on finances, but is not the person who makes the final decisions – this remains the responsibility of the Committee and is based on the advice of the Treasurer; and the Treasurer ensures that the group complies with legal and funders' financial criteria and is the lead Committee officer for financial accountability of the group.

The role of a Committee Member

A Committee is a group of people elected by members to run the business of an association or group for a fixed period – usually one year.

The Committee Member's duties:

- Ensure the Committee functions properly;
- Make sure that all members have the opportunity to participate in discussions;
- Ensure that the Officers (Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) and Committee Members are doing what they agreed;
- Challenge poor practice in meetings;
- Monitor your work and the work of other Committee Members; and make sure all members know the group's plans;
- Act as a representative of your community;

- Regularly speak to or consult with your community to check your ideas and understanding are the same as your members;
- Relay the Association's plans and other work you are doing on their behalf;
- Make yourself available if you have specialist knowledge or skills that will benefit the committee;
- Attend meetings regularly and participate fully in discussions;
- Do not seek personal benefit from your involvement;
- Ensure the committee is actively working to achieve the aims set out in the governance documents. This is crucial to the success of the committee and to how you are perceived by the members;
- Have a clear understanding of the organisation's aims;
- Know the financial situation of the organisation and the potential funding opportunities that exist;
- Accept some responsibility for key areas of the workload, not just relying on the Officers to do everything;
- Support the collective decision, even if you did not agree with it; and
- Put forward suggestions at meetings; constructively challenging yourself and colleagues.

Appendix 2 – Types of meetings



Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Each year the RA holds an AGM in order to:

- Elect the committee to represent the RA for the next 12 months
- Present an annual report of the RA's activities for the previous year
- Present the accounts for the association for the previous year for approval
- Consider any resolutions put forward in writing to the secretary
- Sub-committees, if formed, shall present a report and account of their activities.

At the AGM the following should be standard items on the agenda:

- Chair's annual report
- Treasurer's annual report
- Stand down of committee members
- Nominations for committee members
- Voting of committee members
- Election of committee members
- Current membership status

Committee Meetings

These meetings are where the normal business of the RA is conducted. The constitution will stipulate the minimum number of committee meetings to be held in a year. Some useful committee meeting tips:

- Only committee members should attend (or if all members are allowed to attend, only committee members can vote).
- At the end of each committee meeting, make sure that an action list is drawn up showing which committee member is responsible for a particular task
- Committee members should be willing to help each other with their allocated tasks
- The Secretary should take minutes at each meeting and circulate them to all members as soon as possible

General Meetings

These are large public meetings to which all residents within the RA's defined boundary must be invited and there should be at least two such meetings each year in addition to the AGM. General meetings deal with issues that affect all the membership and it is general meeting decisions that are binding on the committee.

Special General Meetings

These are infrequent public meetings and could be known as 'Emergency General Meetings'. A special procedure has to be followed in order to call such a meeting and would be deemed necessary if an urgent matter had arisen that could not wait until the next scheduled General Meeting.

Virtual Meetings

RAs are finding increasingly flexible ways of working together. Discussions and consultations no longer need to be limited to physical meetings; you can set-up an online meeting through Zoom or similar, an email group or even use WhatsApp. Just make sure that the majority of residents are comfortable using technology and that everyone is given the opportunity to participate in online discussions or decision making – and make sure to keep a record!

Appendix 3 – Grant Information:

Start-up grant

In order to receive the initial start-up grant worth £350 the RA must make a written request by letter or email in addition to providing the following signed documents:

- Constitution, including an Equal Opportunities Policy and Code of Conduct
- Committee members' contact details
- A letter from your bank or building provider with your account details

Annual grant

Once recognised RAs are eligible for an annual grant worth £300, starting from 1 year after the RA has been set up. In order to receive this additional funding, the following documents are to be provided:

- RA's Annual General Meeting (AGM) minutes
- Committee members' contact details
- Up-to-date income and expenditure account signed by the Chair and Treasurer and supported by receipts of expenditure
- Proof of over 50% membership
- A written request for the annual grant via the Annual notification form (available on the RI webpage)

Please note: Grant money can take up to three working weeks to arrive into the Associations' bank account. Please confirm receipt of the grant as soon as you receive it. Please contact the Resident Involvement team after three weeks if you are yet to receive the money. Grants cannot be requested for previous years where applications have not been made.

Your RA may be able to access other local grants either via Notting Hill Genesis or other organisations. Please speak to your Housing Officer or the Resident Involvement team for more information.

Notting Hill Genesis

