

Quick Guide

Guide to Tenant & Resident Self-Organisation



Getting it Together

If you live in a block of flats, or group of homes on an estate all belonging to the same landlord, there are huge advantages to getting people together to demand better repairs or services, or resist unwelcome changes.

Collectivising your issues means that you can delegate the work and divide the labour. Instead of everyone trying to fight the same battle alone, you can share out the tasks.

It means that people can specialise and focus on certain actions instead of trying to be competent at everything. It also helps create a sense of community and support between you and your neighbours.

This guide provides our top tips to tenant and resident self-organisation.



Different Ways of Communicating

Use different ways of contacting your neighbours – as many as possible. Don't rely on just one method and don't be afraid to ask people more than once over time. Sometimes people will be hesitant at first, but become

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more confident as the group grows.

You could include:

- Chatting to neighbours in person when you bump into them.
- Setting aside an early evening or a day at the weekend to knock on doors, maybe with a group of neighbours doing it in pairs.
- Popping a flyer through letterboxes. Keep it simple: say that you are trying to set up a self-organised tenant & resident group, list two or three issues that need to be addressed on the estate, and let them know how they can contact you and get involved. Don't try to cram in too much information – that is better conveyed in person.
- Put the flyer in communal hallways or on notice boards.

Forming the Group



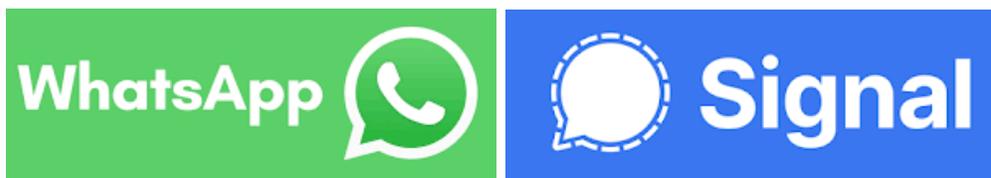
- Ask for email addresses and phone numbers to help you stay in touch.
- Find out what people need for you to communicate with them so that you can be inclusive. For example, someone who is sight impaired or who doesn't read or write in English may need regular catch ups by phone instead to be included.

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- A closed Facebook group (where you have admin rights to only admit the people you want) is great as a platform for communicating with participants and supporters.
- Give your tenant & resident group an identity. A name and even a logo can make it seem more 'real' and authoritative.
- Pay close attention to how your landlord responds to your organising. Try to prevent them infiltrating your group – or taking credit for your achievements.

New Media Platforms



- Set up a *WhatsApp* or *Signal* group so you can all stay in the loop and share information. All the participants need to do is to provide you with their phone number, and then download the relevant app to their phone or computer.
- Set basic ground rules for the group, making it clear what the purpose of the group is. There is a tendency for people to share other information but keeping it focussed will help keep everyone on board.
- WhatsApp and Signal are good for basic information sharing but not suitable for more in-depth discussions or debates. For these, face-to-face or online is better.

Running the Group

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- If you can gather together for a meeting in-person, that's a great way to get everyone bonding. Having biscuits and other snacks at the meeting helps make it more relaxed and comfortable for those who might not know many people or feel anxious in groups.
- If meeting in person isn't possible, there are lots of virtual alternatives like *Zoom* and *Microsoft Teams* that can be downloaded for free. People can join from a computer but also an ordinary smartphone.
- In the meetings, identify potential leaders. These are the people who have energy, conviction, communication skills, and are available to take on some of the organising tasks.
- Leaders can drive things forward but they shouldn't do everything. Delegate as widely as possible: this makes people feel included, gives them a stake in the campaign and builds the skills of the group.
- Try to make people see the benefits of getting involved in a group rather than guilt-tripping them into doing their bit. Be tolerant and unjudgmental: people's lives are complicated and there are all sorts of reasons why they might not be able to do something.
- In your first group meeting, focus on the big picture rather than detail. Why is the group necessary? What would you like to achieve? Strategy and tactics will flow from this.





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Reaching Out

Once you have decided what the group wants the landlord to act on, you might need to agitate publicly to get their attention if the direct approach doesn't work straight away.

Always reach out for help – there is a lot of goodwill out there!

- Twitter is great for short messages. A public Facebook page is also a useful platform if you make this one open to anyone (rather than the closed Facebook group just for participants and supporters).
- Tell the world what your group is fighting for, and tag relevant people like local politicians, journalists, activists etc.



- Link up with other housing campaign groups in your area or fighting on a common battleground (like SHAC, Homes for All, Radical Housing Network, and others).
- Trade unions and local Trade Union Councils are also a great source of help. Find out if people in your group are union members and then ask them to lobby their union for help.



www.shaction.org | shac.action@gmail.com | <https://www.facebook.com/groups/www.shaction.org>
@HAWRNet / @ActionSHAC

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- The help and support you can get from other groups can be invaluable. You might ask for:
 - Printing leaflets or posters – send the design, and specify the number needed, and delivery address.
 - Funding – be clear on how much is needed, what it is for, and how it can be paid to your group.
 - An article about your campaign to be published on their website.



- Messages for sharing on their social media as well as your own. They will often have a large number of followers already and can amplify your message.
 - Press releases to be sent via their own press lists and to journalists they've worked with in the past. These are more likely to get attention.
- Mobilising extra people for any demonstrations or actions that you are taking. They can let their own supporters know and some will be nearby so will help swell your ranks.

SHAC

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