

Regional Interest Groups West Midlands



Join your peers and the Federation to make a difference for housing in the West Midlands

As a valued member of the National Housing Federation you are entitled to free membership of our regional interest groups - one of the key benefits of Federation membership in the region.

Groups operating throughout the West Midlands cover a very broad range of specialisms - offering something for everyone working in the housing association sector.

Our regional interest groups offer opportunities to:

- Hear about and discuss topical issues
- Contribute to consultations and policy development
- Network with those in similar roles
- Campaign to make a difference for the greater good

- Organise events to inform and influence local stakeholders
- Share best practice
- Discuss any problems or concerns with peers

... and much more.

This brochure has all you need to get involved in the West Midlands.

Alongside the full list of regional interest groups and key contact details, it also includes examples of the work our groups are involved in.

Get in touch

For more information about any of our regional interest groups, contact:

Leah Jackson,
Office Administrator

National Housing Federation
Midlands and South West

T: 0117 929 7388

E: leah.jackson@housing.org.uk

W: www.housing.org.uk/westmidlands

 www.twitter.co.uk/natfedwestmid

Examples of West Midlands regional interest groups



Care & Support Forum

The West Midlands Care and Support Forum promotes partnerships between housing associations, managing agents, health and local authorities.

Each year, members of this group work with the Federation on Supported Housing Month. Recently renamed Support Matters Month the campaign raises the profile of care and support services among councillors, MPs, health professionals and others.

If you would like to participate in this year's campaign [get in touch](#).

Rural Development Group

The West Midlands Rural Development Group is working to ensure that rural communities in the region get a fair slice of available investment money and that housing policies from government are 'rural proof.'

The group also works to raise the profile of the importance of affordable rural housing through working with the Federation in the region to promote the work they do. Each year members participate in the Federation's Rural Housing Week campaign, organising events for parish councillors, local authorities and MPs. If you would like to participate this year [get in touch](#).

Continuous Improvement Group

Early in 2012 the group focused on techniques in improving services in response to changes to regulation. Since then, we have been concentrating on welfare reform, sharing information on profiling, demographics, stock density and best use of stock to inform our approaches to tackle the challenges this brings. We have also been following the progress of the Localism Act and it's impact on complaints handling in the sector.

Going forward, there is still learning to be achieved around Welfare Reform impacts and options such as Credit Unions; the approach to fixed term tenancies and external complaints panels.

Investment Group

During 2012 one of the group's main areas of focus was the 2011-15 Affordable Homes Programme (AHP), identifying potential 'blockages' with delivery. This will continue through 2013 when the group will also look at preparing for the post March 2015 'cliff' when the current programme ends. Other key issues included a review of the new planning system with a training session run by their retained Planning Consultant Tetlow King. The group will now assess how the planning system's working for live schemes and the likely impact of Affordable Rent where service charges apply, with service charges increasing above the rate of rent rises resulting in a net decrease in rental income.

Communications Network

The West Midlands Communications Network plays a critical role in supporting Federation media, campaigning and publications work.

We regularly contact members of the group looking for case studies in response to requests from the media, and often liaise with them to find suitable sites as a backdrop for television interviews. We are also able to direct the media to individual members of the group when media outlets are looking

for housing association interviews on a specific subject.

Federation updates on communications activity are provided at quarterly meetings which are well attended and attract a range of speakers. Recently the group has focussed on media perceptions of the sector, copyright and social media.



Examples of West Midlands regional interest groups

Central Home Ownership Group



In 2012 members of the group started using social media to raise awareness about shared ownership and to promote the benefits, transforming communication with partners, stakeholders, colleagues and customers. Members of the group also shared experiences of outright sale, giving best practice on using surpluses to cross-subsidise

affordable housing programmes. This included appraisal of market schemes, pricing strategy, promotional activities, show homes and signage.

The FirstBuy equity loan product was also investigated as potential competition to shared ownership. The group concluded it would only be an issue in areas where property values are relatively low.

The group also shared with the National Housing Federation their experiences of negotiating out restriction on S106 and local lending issues.

Incomes and Inclusion Group

Established over nine years ago to support colleagues working with Housing Benefit in social housing, we now have a much wider remit of financial inclusion and income management. We reach over 75 social housing providers every week with email updates, requests for best practice, individual queries and information on current initiatives.

During 2012 a working group

focused on welfare reform literature, resulting in shared templates and standard text to support communication to tenants. Thanks to [HBNNotes](#) for their help.

Group meetings were held during 2012 in Telford, Shrewsbury and Stoke covering fuel poverty, money management training, debt and money advice, Credit Union modernisation, digital inclusion and welfare reform updates.

HR Forum

With members representing 26 organisations, this group has been focussing on a range of issues including HR systems, appraisals, competency frameworks and social media policies.

They have recently created a shared database of training providers and courses and have also set up a Linked In network to enable members to share and request information.



Midlands Network for Resident Involvement

In April 2012, the Midlands Network for Resident Involvement (MNRI) launched a groundbreaking partnership to provide free training for thousands of housing association and council residents across the East and West Midlands.

The Training Academy is the first of its kind in the UK to offer learning and support at no charge. By boosting customers' skills and confidence, the new academy aims to help build safe, happy

neighbourhoods where local people have a strong voice.

The first training topic was equality and diversity, followed by courses on going green to save energy and money, confidence and assertiveness and communication skills.

To find out more, join the Training Academy, or to host or run a training session, email [Richard Hancock](#) or call 01905 342600.

West Midlands regional interest groups 2013

Board Members' Forum

Chair: [Mike Ager, Heantun Housing Association](#)

Housing services Group

Chair: [Jula Brady, St Basils](#)

Care and Support Forum

Chair: [Mick Gallagher, Bromford Group](#)

HR Forum

Chair: [Helen Watkins, Housing Plus](#)

Central Home Ownership Group

Chair: [Bob Deol, Mercian Housing](#)

Investment Group

Chair: [Alan Yates, Accord Group](#)

Continuous Improvement Group

Chair: [Kathryn Webster, East Midlands Housing Group](#)

Midland Network for Resident Involvement

Chair: [Chris Pinson-Bradley, Heantun Housing](#)

Finance Group

Chair: [Andy Howarth, Worcester Community Housing](#)

PR and Communications Group

Chair: [Sarah Clee, Midland Heart](#)

Northern and Midlands Incomes and Inclusion Group

Chair: [Deb Morrison@wrekinhousingtrust.org.uk](mailto:Deb.Morrison@wrekinhousingtrust.org.uk)

Rural Development Group

Chair: [Paul Sutton, Shropshire Housing Group](#)

Employment and Skills Group

Contact: [Leah Jackson, National Housing Federation](#)

Smaller Housing Association Group

Contact: [Elizabeth Humphreys, National Housing Federation](#)

HAMMAR (Housing Asset Management, Maintenance and Regeneration)

Chair: [Wayne Gethings, Wrekin Housing Trust](#)

Social Enterprise Group

Chair: [Steve Woods, Adullam Homes Housing Association](#)

Want to find out more or join? Is anything missing?

For more information about any of these groups, please contact the chair directly.

If you would be interested in joining a group, please contact leah.jackson@housing.org.uk.

If you think there's a need for a new group that isn't currently listed above, please contact elizabeth.humphreys@housing.org.uk

Make the most of your membership and get involved

Elizabeth Humphreys
Lead Manager West Midlands
National Housing Federation
Tel: 07919 110 536
Email: elizabeth.humphreys@housing.org.uk

Leah Jackson
Office Administrator, Midlands and South West
National Housing Federation
Tel: 0117 929 7388
Email: leah.jackson@housing.org.uk