



OFFICE OF THE
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

information sheet

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Estate Management Boards

A large, stylized version of the TPAS logo, with the letters 'TPAS' in a bold, sans-serif font, and a dark swoosh above the letters, set against a light background.

ESTATE MANAGEMENT BOARDS

Introduction

There are a number of options available for tenants to become involved in the management of their homes, including setting up a Tenant Management Organisation, of which an Estate Management Board (EMB) is one example. Funding is available from Department of the Environment for council tenants and the Housing Corporation for housing association tenants. This funding enables agencies (such as TPAS) to carry out in-depth work with tenants on a particular estate and to discuss the options available for greater involvement. There are only two types of Tenant Management Organisation, Estate Management Boards (EMBs) and Tenant Management Co-ops (TMCs).

This Information Sheet is designed to answer tenants' specific questions about EMBs. It covers what an EMB is, what it does, how it is set up, the roles and responsibilities of the EMB and the landlord, and some of the advantages and disadvantages of EMBs.

What is an estate management board?

- Estate Management Boards are often called EMBs for short and that is how we will refer to them in this Information Sheet.
- EMBs are a partnership between tenants and their landlord to give tenants more control over the day to day running of their housing.

An EMB is an independent legal organisation which must register either as an Industrial and Provident Society or as a Tenant Management Company Limited by Guarantee.

What sort of homes can be covered by an estate management board?

- All types of housing. Most EMBs so far have been formed on urban estates, but there are examples of rural EMBs which manage scattered properties.
- Ideally the area managed by an EMB should reflect a recognised neighbourhood or community with logical boundaries and common interests.
- There are no absolute rules on size, but an EMB usually covers between 100 and 1500 homes.

What does an estate management board do?

- It is directly responsible for housing management policies and practices for the homes in the area it covers.
- An annual budget is allocated from the landlord to the estate (or group of homes), and the members of the board decide how this will be spent. (But unlike a Tenants Management Co-op, the EMB does not usually have a cheque book to its own bank account - the EMBs' money is still held within the landlord's overall housing budgets).
- It is up to each EMB to agree which services it will take responsibility for making decisions about. They will be laid out, after negotiation with the landlord, in a detailed document called a Management Agreement. (This is explained in more depth in the section of this Information Sheet about 'Responsibilities of an EMB').

Who can be a member of an estate management board?

- An EMB is made up of elected tenant representatives, landlord representatives and other co-opted members.
- The board can vary in size depending on the number of homes covered but a typical EMB board could be:
 - 12 tenants
 - 4 landlord representatives
 - 4 co-optees
- Whatever the size of the board, tenant representatives should be in a majority to ensure that there is a strong voice and real decision making power for tenants.
- Owner occupiers (for example, ex-tenants who bought their homes from the landlord) can be represented on the EMB as a co-opted member.

How is an estate management board set up?

There are three stages:

(1) The Promotional Stage

- Tenants who are interested in Tenant Management Organisations of which an EMB is an example can get help from a development agency, (for example TPAS), to look at the options.
- A tenants' association, an Estate Action group or simply any interested tenants can ask TPAS to help.
- Alternatively, this initiative can come from a landlord

that wants to find out if its tenants are interested in Tenant Management Options.

(2) The Feasibility Stage

- Grants are available from the Department of the Environment and the Housing Corporation to pay for TPAS, (or a similar agency), to work for about 6 months with a steering group of interested tenants on a 'feasibility study'. A feasibility study will look at all the options for tenant management and narrow down to a preferred option.
- The feasibility study involves meetings, training sessions, surveys and newsletters, all designed to let all tenants in the area know what an EMB and other options involve, and to find out how they feel about setting one up.
- At the end of the study all tenants are balloted to find out if a majority are in favour of the preferred option, for example an EMB, going ahead. If they are, the next stage is the development stage when tenants form a group to employ an agency to help them negotiate the way in which the EMB will work with the landlord.

(3) The Development Stage

At this stage tenants choose a development agent or staff to assist them. The development stage usually takes between eighteen months and two years.

Again TPAS or another agency will work closely with tenants at this stage.

- Development is carried out through meetings, training sessions, newsletters, and so on, to enable tenants to gain the necessary knowledge and skills to run an EMB.
- As part of the development stage tenants usually operate a 'shadow' EMB. This means they get the chance to have a practice run at doing the work of an EMB but at this stage the landlord is still in control whilst the tenants are learning.
- The Management Agreement is negotiated and written. This sets out the responsibilities of the EMB and the landlord.
- A Local Management Organisation with a membership of tenants, which will eventually elect the tenant representatives to the Board, is set up.
- The EMB is legally established.
- At the end of the development stage all tenants are balloted again to see if a majority wish to proceed with taking over management on their estate on the terms proposed.

What are the responsibilities of an estate management board?

The responsibilities of an EMB are set out

in a Management Agreement. All management agreements will cover the following:

- A definition of the relationship between the EMB and the landlord.
- The length of time the agreement will run for.
- How it will be monitored and reviewed.
- The procedure that should be followed if either the EMB or the landlord want to end the agreement.
- How any disputes between the EMB and the landlord will be dealt with.
- The financial arrangements.
- The rules of the EMB.

The Management Agreement will also specify which housing management functions the EMB is taking over decision making responsibility for. These may be different for various EMBs but can include all of the following:

- Waiting list, allocations and lettings (within the landlord's policy).
- Rent collection and arrears recovery.
- Tenancy matters.
- Repairs and maintenance.
- Cleaning and caretaking.
- Running of an estate office.
- Management of staff.
- Co-ordination of capital works.
- Monitoring.
- Training for tenants and staff.

What are the responsibilities of the landlord?

The landlord has some legal responsibilities and these functions cannot be delegated to an EMB.

- Ownership of the homes.
- Overall housing policy.

- Setting minimum standards and monitoring them.
- Setting rent levels.
- Allocating the budget to the EMB.
- Capital allocation.
- Nominations to the waiting list, allocations policy, and ensuring that legal responsibilities to house homeless people and other priority groups are met.
- Training and support.
- Corporate membership of the EMB and nomination of landlord representatives.
- All matters connected with the employment rights and the conditions of service of the staff employed by the EMB: for example, wages, grievance and disciplinary procedures, appointments and dismissals, pensions and so on.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of having an estate management board?

Advantages

- Homes are still owned by the landlord so tenants' rights are not changed in any way.
- Tenants have much more decision making power over their housing services but they can still get a lot of help from the landlord. Local management and tenant management can improve repairs, voids, community spirit, etc.
- EMBs have so far had a better chance of getting Government money for improvements to the

homes they control. This, of course, depends on Government policy and may change as more EMBs are set up.

- The local office is likely to be more accessible to tenants, more aware of their needs and quicker to respond.
- Budget savings that are made when an EMB is operating well can be spent on improvements that the EMB decides on.
- An EMB offers tenants the opportunity for decision making power without tenants alone having to take on the responsibilities of a Tenant Management Co-op.
- It takes fewer active tenants to run an EMB than are needed for a Tenant Management Co-op.

Disadvantages

- The landlord continues to set the rents so savings cannot result in reduced rents.
- Tenants who are on the Board may find it difficult to cope with the amount of work involved.
- Care needs to be taken that the EMB is not only attractive to many tenants because of the possibility that it will bring more resources into the EMB area. There are no guarantees that an EMB will result in extra money being allocated either from the landlord or the Government.
- The issue of making sure that tenants have a chance to influence decisions can arise. The Board may become distant from other tenants or allow staff to have a high level of influence.

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