



MEMBERSHIP POLICY

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Policy	Membership Policy								
Version reference	Version 7								
Approved by	Board of Management								
Date of Approval	2 November 2023								
Review Period	3 years								
Review Due	November 2026								
Policy Review	Director of Finance & Business Support								
Who this policy affects	Board	X	Customers	X	Contractors		Members of the Public	X	
Where this policy affects	General needs		X	Supported		X	Office / staff base		X

1. Who are we?

1.1 We are a forward thinking, tenant focused housing association committed to providing high quality sustainable places to live, designed to meet the changing needs of the communities we serve throughout West Lothian. We manage approximately 2,500 properties across the region.

1.2 We work closely with our tenants and stakeholders to deliver our Business Strategy which supports our vision to improve life experiences and opportunities. [View our Business Strategy.](#)

1.3 If you are interested in working with us, this policy provides information on what being a shareholding member involves and how you could become a member of Almond Housing Association.

2. Why become a Shareholder of Almond Housing Association?

2.1 As a not for profit organisation and a registered Scottish charity, we want to ensure that we have a strong and active membership base that is focused on ensuring we deliver the best possible outcomes for our tenants and their communities.

2.2 We will not seek shareholders simply to achieve a large membership. Our priority is to attract and retain members who are passionate about what we do and who wish to actively engage with us and participate at Annual and Special General Meetings.

2.3 As a member you will be provided with:

- a Share Certificate
- a copy of the Association's Rules
- details of how Members can participate in the Association, including the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and how to stand for election to the Board of Management.

2.4 As a member you will be a key stakeholder of the Association and will be invited to participate and vote at our Annual General Meeting, to nominate or be nominated for a place on our Board of Management and to participate in the election of Board of Management members. You will be instrumental to the running of the organisation.

3 Who Can Become a Member?

3.1 As well as attracting and maintaining an engaged and active membership we believe that achieving an appropriately balanced Membership is fundamental to the success of the Association.

3.2 Our ambition is to attract and retain a majority of tenant members to ensure our membership reflects the needs and aspirations of our tenants and their communities throughout West Lothian.

3.3 Whilst we strive to attract and maintain a majority tenant membership, we understand the importance of balanced representation. As a community based housing association we are proud of the role we play within the wider community as well as supporting communities of need and this policy seeks to ensure that this continues. As well as tenants, we encourage representation from individuals who have relevant knowledge, skills, experience or expertise that are complementary to the aims of the Association. We will seek to ensure that no one organisation or group has undue influence.

3.4 Membership is open to all sections of the community and no one will be discriminated against on the basis of age, sex, sexual orientation, race, disability, religion or belief, marital status, pregnancy and maternity or gender reassignment. We will actively encourage membership from under-

represented groups and will work with applicants to ensure the application process is as inclusive as possible.

3.5 You will be eligible to become a member if you:

- are over the age of 16¹ and;
- are an Almond tenant, factored owner, service user; or
- you are able to demonstrate relevant knowledge, skills, experience or expertise that are complementary to the aims of the Association.

3.6 Whilst all applications are welcome, we aim to recruit non-tenant members with a particular interest in our core objectives and with experience or interest in the following areas:

- Housing management
- Asset management
- Financial management
- Net Zero/climate change management
- Human Resources Tenant engagement/customer focus
- Community Development/grant funding
- Information Technology (technical)

3.7 We accept applications from organisations as well as individuals. A member organisation is free to appoint any person it considers suitable as a representative. That person will represent the member organisation's rights and powers at Almond HA's AGM, but must act with regard to the best interests of the Association. To confirm the identity of a representative the organisation must send a copy of the signed authorisation or appointment of the representative. An organisation can change their representative by withdrawing the authority of the original representative. If a representative of an organisation is already a Member, they cannot continue to be a member in their own right. Individual membership will be suspended, until such times as the individual is no longer a representative of the organisation they represent.

3.8 Existing members of staff will not be eligible to become Members. If a Member takes up employment with us, they will be required to cancel their membership for their period of employment.

4. Promotion of Membership

4.1 Tenants will be made aware of the benefits of membership at the start of their tenancy and asked if they are interested in becoming a member. Tenants will be made aware that membership is not a condition of tenancy and that they can apply for membership at any time. Membership to tenants will be promoted regularly through our website, social media and general communications.

4.2. Members of the local community and community groups will be made aware of the opportunity to become members through our website and social media and opportunities may, from time to time, be advertised in local publications and digital platforms.

4.3. Membership will be promoted at Almond events and within promotional publications where appropriate.

¹ Association Rules para 8

5. Applying for Membership

5.1 You can apply to become a member at any time by completing our Membership Application Form on our website or by asking a member of our team to send you a copy by e-mail or post. Completed forms can be returned by email to enquiries@almondha.org.uk, or by post and the £1 membership fee can be paid by BACS (bank transfer).

5.2 Board of Management has responsibility for approval of membership applications and will consider applications at their next available meeting, or within three months of being received at the latest.

5.3 Membership shall take effect from the date of approval and the Register will be updated to reflect that within seven working days. Your Almond HA share certificate will be issued to you by post along with a copy of our Rules and our most recent Annual Report.

5.4 You can only have one share in the Association. Shares cannot be held jointly, joint tenants may each become individual members.

5.5 Shares shall carry no right to interest, dividend or bonus

6. Refusal of Membership

6.1 Whilst it is our intention to promote and encourage membership, the Board reserves the right to refuse membership and the following shall constitute grounds for refusal of an application for membership:

- Where the membership would be contrary to the Almond's Rules or policies
- Where a conflict of interest may exist which, even allowing for the disclosure of such an interest, may adversely affect the work of Almond
- Where the Board considers that accepting the application would not be in the best interests of Almond
- Where the applicant is a member of the Almond HA workforce or has been employed by Almond in the previous 12 months.

6.2 If an application is unsuccessful reasons for refusal will be given in writing and will be provided within 14 working days of the decision being made. The £1 membership fee will also be returned at this time.

7. Participation of Members

7.1 As a member we will keep you informed and up to date with our activities. Whilst we will aim to digitalise our communications as far as possible, we will always look to contact you in a way that meets your needs and in line with our Rules. We will:

- Publicise Annual General Meeting at least 14 days before the day of the meeting
- Circulate information to you so you can participate and make informed decisions at the Annual General Meeting
- Provide information in a different format or language
- Make every effort to hold Annual General Meetings at times and locations suitable to our membership
- Keep you informed on all major developments affecting the Association and actively promote consultations and opportunities to serve on the Board of Management

8. Termination of Membership

8.1 Whilst we seek to maintain an active membership there will be circumstances in which membership will cease. Membership will cease when a Member:

- Resigns by giving 7 days written notice to the Secretary
- Becomes an employee of Almond
- Is expelled as a result of the Association receiving a complaint about the Member's behaviour and more than two thirds of Members vote to end their membership, in accordance with the Rule 11.1.4
- Changes address but does not notify us of their new address within three months, unless the new address is also one of our properties
- Fails to attend or submit apologies for five consecutive Annual General Meetings
- Death

8.2 The £1.00 membership fee is not refundable on termination of membership.

9. Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

9.1 Almond aims to ensure that equality, fairness, dignity and respect are central to the way we work and how we treat our customers. We support diversity and uphold equal opportunities in all areas of our work as an employer and service provider.

9.2 Almond will not discriminate against tenants, staff, visitors, suppliers or others based on their age, sex, sexual orientation, race, disability, religion or belief, marital status, pregnancy and maternity or gender reassignment (collectively referred to as 'protected characteristics' in the Equality Act 2010).

10. Data Protection

10.1 Our policies and procedures foster an approach of 'data protection by design and by default'.

What this means in practice is that:

- Policies and procedures consider data protection issues, ie how to protect the data subject served by the policy or procedure;
- New systems, services, products and business practices involving personal data are designed and implemented to ensure personal data is protected by default;
- That the Data protection principles and safeguarding of individuals' rights (such as data minimisation, pseudo anonymisation, and purpose limitation) are clear in the policy or procedure;
- And that if the policy or procedure aims to provide service to vulnerable groups (e.g. children) that the personal data is treated with extra protection.

What this requires users of this policy to do is:

- Make sure that staff understand why data protection is important for the implementation of this policy, for instance via training or by reading the data protection policies;
- If we are undertaking a review of the policy, change to process or change to system, that we must consider doing a Data Protection Impact assessment, if the change is likely to result in a high risk to individuals.

- It is also good practice to do a DPIA for any other major project which requires the processing of personal data.

We will consult our data protection officer, if there is doubt over these requirements.

11. Policy Review

11.1 This policy will be reviewed every three years or as required due to legislative or regulatory change. The review will be completed by the Director of Finance & Business Support and circulated to the Board of Management for approval.

12. Associated Policies & Guidance

12.1 This Policy takes account of the following documents:

- Rules of Almond Housing Association
- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Openness & Confidentiality Policy
- Scottish Federation of Housing Association's Code of Conduct for Governing Body Members

Scottish Housing Regulatory Standards of Governance & Financial Management

13. Responsibilities Chart

13.1 The chart below illustrates the responsibilities of all staff in relation to this policy.

	Board	CEO	Director of Finance & Business Support	Governance Manager	All Staff
To set the Membership Policy	✓				
To approve Members	✓				
Take lead and make decision regarding applications	✓				
To Implement the policy		✓			
Ensure Almond HA staff have an understanding of Association membership				✓	
Policy Review			✓		
Ensure effective and clear communication with membership				✓	✓
Ensure Policy Reviewed	✓				
Ensure Equality & Diversity guidance is adhered to					✓
Appeals process	✓				

Policy Assessment Checklist

Health & Safety Assessment

Does this policy have the potential to affect:

	Yes	No
Lone Working	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Safety and/or wellbeing of customers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Safety and/or wellbeing of staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Equality Impact Assessment

Does this policy have the potential to affect:

	Yes	No
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Marriage and Civil Partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy and Maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Religion or belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sexual orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

If you have answered 'Yes' to any of these points, please complete a full Equality Impact Assessment. If you have answered 'No', you need take no further action in completing an Equality Impact Assessment.

Data Protection Impact Assessment

Carrying out a Data Protection Impact Assessment [DPIA] will be useful to any project – large or small – that:

- Involves personal or sensitive data about individuals
- May affect our customers' reasonable expectations relating to privacy
- Involves information that may be used to identify or target individuals

A Data Protection Impact Assessment [DPIA] must be completed if the policy involves one or more of the following (please tick each that apply to this policy):

Evaluation or scoring	<input type="checkbox"/>
Automated decision-making with significant effects;	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Systematic monitoring</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Processing of sensitive data or data of a highly personal nature</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Processing on a large scale</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Processing of data concerning vulnerable data subjects</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Innovative technological or organisational solutions</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Processing that involves preventing data subjects from exercising a right or using a service or contract</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<i>Use systematic and extensive profiling or automated decision-making to make significant decisions about people</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Process special-category data or criminal-offence data on a large scale</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Systematically monitor a publicly accessible place on a large scale</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Use of new technologies involving significant innovation</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Use profiling, automated decision-making or special category data to help Make decisions on someone's access to a service, opportunity or benefit</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Carry out profiling on a large scale</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Process biometric or genetic data</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Combine, compare or match data from multiple sources</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Process personal data without providing a privacy notice directly to the individual</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Process personal data in a way that involves tracking individuals' online or offline location or behaviour</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Process children's personal data for profiling or automated decision-making or for marketing purposes, or offer online services directly to them</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Process personal data that could result in a risk of physical harm in the event of a security breach</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>There is a change to the nature, scope, context or purposes of our processing</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If a DPIA is not carried out, please summarise the reasons below

None of the above apply. Application for membership is by choice and consent, and there will be no automated scoring or profiling of applicants. Membership form will ask for basic personal information, and will does not ask for special category data.