

Community First New Forest



Starting up a New Group Toolkit

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How do you start up a community group?

Start By Planning

Defining the reason for your new group might be the starting point, as will defining what you want to achieve. The group needs a single purpose or aim. Your aim should describe the people that you want to help and what you hope will change as a result of your group existing. Your aims should be realistic but also broad enough to cover everything the group wants to do. All the members setting up the organisation need to discuss and agree the aim. Once you know what you are interested in, you can start to think about how to set it up and operate it.

Before you set up a new group, it is worth checking to see if there are any existing groups in your area (or similar). You can research this on the internet, at your local library, through Community First New Forest or New Forest District Council. If there are groups with the same aims then maybe you could join forces with them.

If there is not a suitable group in your area that you can join, the following suggestions will help you to set up and run your own group.

Your organisation will probably be set up to support a group of people in need. In order to make your service effective you will have to undertake a little research to identify who will benefit, whether there is a need and obtain evidence of this. You should consult with the group, talk to them before deciding what services to offer.

The people who will benefit from your work are called your beneficiaries.

Example sources of evidence

- Questionnaire asking people's opinions
- Written and spoken statements from users and community members on what services they need
- Numbers and types of people who may use the service
- Information from the latest census and local authority
- Observations/case studies of change

Speak to the experts

Your local Council for Voluntary Service will be able to offer you advice and guidance on setting up your group.

What are your group's objectives for the first year?

Your objectives are the actions you plan to achieve within a specific time period, in this case the first year. All the objectives should lead to achieving the overall aim you have set for the organisation.

There are primarily two different types of objectives;

- Firstly what you might need to achieve to run your service
- Secondly what you need to achieve to run the organisation

Take time to think about;

- How often your activities will run – *eg daily, weekly, monthly, twice a year?*
- When will they run – *what time is most convenient for those you are trying to help?*
- How many people will use the service – *eg 30 people at each session, 300 over a year, 100 phone calls to a help line?*
- When will you start the service, how long do you plan to run?
- Who will run the service?
- What will change as a result of the service?

Who is running your service?

- What qualifications and experience will be needed?
- Will you be using paid staff or volunteers?
- How will you recruit?
- How will you supervise staff/volunteers and appraise their performance?
- If you have people working with children or vulnerable adults do you need DBS checks? Have you costed this into your budget?
- How will you provide staff and or volunteer development and training? Your staff and volunteers will need support to carry out their work and will want to develop their skills in order to deliver a quality service. All training has costs associated with it, both financial and the time involved.

Being a voluntary group does not excuse you from being a good employer. Failing to act properly is costly in time, money and emotion. Always seek advice about the legal and financial implications of recruiting staff.

General Guidelines

Just as there are many different reasons to form a group, there are many different types of group you could set up. It's worth thinking about what kind of group you imagine it will be, as this may affect the order you do things in.

Every member should feel valued and that their contribution of time and energy is helping achieve a common purpose.

Membership of the group should be as wide as possible and not just include known local leaders – ideally develop people as you go and encourage more people to join the group and take an active role.

- Identify interested individuals (*for example by word of mouth or from a public meeting*)
- Agree what you want to achieve as a group
- Agree how you are going to do it and how you will make decisions
- Set out the rules of your group in terms of reference or a constitution, these should include:
 - name of group
 - purpose of group
 - membership of group
 - roles of members, for example - Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer
 - frequency of meetings
 - financial arrangements
 - arrangements for changing the constitution and ending the group

Terms of reference or a constitution help to make sure everyone is clear about the way the group works - it can help prevent arguments at a later date. It will also be necessary if you want to apply for funding or open a bank account.

It can be quite difficult to get people to join a new group and it's often even harder to keep them involved. One of the best ways to do this is to give people a role that they are interested in doing or experienced at.

They might have useful:

- contacts
- knowledge
- social skills

Running meetings

Different groups will run meetings in different ways. Some will be very informal with everyone mucking in and doing everything together, others will be more formal with people having particular roles - such as a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer.

However your group chooses to work, you can help to get more out of your meetings by;

- having an agenda – a list of things you need to talk about in the meeting
- make sure everyone knows the agenda – ideally before the meeting – and has an opportunity to add to it
- take notes at each meeting – make sure you write down what decisions are made, what action needs to be taken and by when, and who's going to do what. Give everyone a copy of the notes or minutes after the meeting – it helps to remind them what they've got to do. Agree that the notes are an correct record at your next meeting
- be clear – use plain language and try to avoid using jargon. Make sure everyone understands what you are talking about, particularly new members who may not know the background, and
- encourage people to ask questions and contribute ideas.

Roles

Groups need to be self-managing so the wide tasks can be shared. It's no use burdening one or two people to the extent that they quit and nothing can happen without them. Important roles include:

- Chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Publicity Officer
- Fundraiser
- "Happy helpers" - the people who will help with anything, from making tea to helping at an event!

If you really care about something, the idea of starting a group to do something about it can be both exciting and daunting. Use this toolkit to help you think through the first steps and start to get things moving.

Organising a public meeting

Holding a public meeting can be a really good way of building a campaign or getting more people involved in your group. Here are a few ideas to help you organise a meeting that is interesting, accessible and run smoothly.

Keep it simple

Running a discussion with members of the public, particularly if a lot of people show up, can be a bit daunting. It is important not to be too ambitious about what to include in the meeting.

A public meeting is not the place to have complicated discussions about the structure of your group or the details of what and how the group will operate. Instead, use it as a way to share basic information about your group or campaign, encourage others to share their opinions and ideas, and gain contact details of people who may wish to be involved in the future.

A survey or questionnaire will often engage people.

Publicise it well

The design of your publicity material is important. You need to think about who you are hoping to attract to the meeting and make sure your publicity will catch their eye and give them a reason to come along to your meeting. Make sure the date, time and place of the meeting are clearly shown on the leaflet and that it's very clear what the meeting is about. Just as the plan for your meeting should be simple, the topic that you publicise should be simple and clear too.

If your meeting is going to be a large one, with as many people involved as possible, you will need to do as much publicity as you can. You could use:

- flyers through letterboxes
- posters in shop windows or on community noticeboards
- leaflets in places where the people you want to reach are likely to go
- a letter or advert in a community newsletter
- a piece in the local paper
- an announcement on the local radio
- a Facebook event
- a page on your website, if you have one
- regular Twitter announcements, especially in the day or two before the event
- a stand or display at a local venue (library, surgery, market place etc)

Offer an incentive

Not many people enjoy meetings, and for some it is a big effort to arrange childcare or transport, so it's a good idea to offer an extra attraction. This could simply be free refreshments, or perhaps a video or speaker about something to do with the group's aims or activity.

Think about the venue and facilities

Make your event as accessible as possible. You should make sure the room/venue is accessible to wheelchair users, and that people who have a hearing impairment will be able to take part by using a hearing loop. Think about any other equipment or resources you'll need on the day. Might you need to think about organising a crèche? Will you need to have a sign language interpreter? Should you put up signs directing people to the right room when they arrive?

Think about the agenda

If people take the time to come along to a public meeting, it is because they really care about the topic being discussed. It is your job to make sure that the meeting sticks to the topic. Although it is important to give people a chance to have their say, it is also important not to allow the discussion to go off on a tangent that is different from the subject people have come along to talk about.

A good way of doing this is to prepare an agenda in advance. What you include in this will depend on the purpose and expected size of the meeting, but here are some ideas you could use:

- Welcome and introductions
 - Introduce the chair, explain who called the meeting and why.
- Aims of the meeting
 - Outline why the meeting has been called, e.g. to build a campaign.
- Speakers
 - You may choose to have a couple of people who know a lot about the topic to begin the meeting by sharing some information and their opinions. Make sure you introduce them so that everyone knows who they are.
- Opportunity for people to share information and opinions.
 - It is important to give people an opportunity to share their thoughts about the topic. If there are too many people wishing to speak than there is time for, make sure you choose a range of people, including people who are not members of your group or who have not been involved in your campaign before.

- Planning
 - Public meetings can be good opportunities to come up with initial ideas about action that could be taken on the issue in future. Allow some opportunity for people to share their ideas, but don't allow the meeting to get bogged down with unnecessary details. Make a note of people's ideas.
- What are the next steps?
 - If the meeting is quite small, this might be an opportunity to reach decisions about what action is actually going to be taken. Be sure to include discussion of what practical tasks need to be done, and who is going to do them.
 - If the meeting is large this won't be possible. Instead, make sure people's ideas have been noted down, and that you have a plan about when the next meeting will be so that people can come and get involved with the detailed planning stage later.

Chairing the meeting

If you have called the meeting, people will be expecting you to act as Chair. If it's going to be a large meeting and you are not confident in this role, it may be worth asking someone else to chair the meeting. Be careful that your choice of chair is not going to cause controversy in the meeting.

Involve everyone in the discussion

While it's important to appear well-organised, you also want to let people know that their contribution is needed and valuable, so make sure you don't close off discussion too quickly. The people who have come along to the meeting are the future members of the group, and you need to make sure the atmosphere of this meeting is as welcoming and open as possible.

Take minutes

Decide who will be taking minutes before the meeting. It is hard to take minutes and chair, so these roles should be done by different people. The minutes of your meeting don't have to be very detailed, but they should include a clear note of any decisions made at the meeting, and in particular who has agreed to take on which jobs.

Gather names and addresses

Make sure you take contact details from everyone who wants to be kept in touch with the group – prepare a sheet in advance which you can pass round the meeting or have on a table at the door.

Have a plan for your next meeting

Make sure you have already fixed a date and venue for your group's next meeting, and that you advertise this so that people can come along if they want to. It is useful to print some fliers with these details on, and your contact details, for people to take away.

Choosing the structure of your organisation

Legal Status of Voluntary and Community Organisations

Voluntary and community organisations in England have a choice about what legal status to adopt. In the eyes of the law an organisation is either:

- Unincorporated association – a collection of individuals working together.
- Corporate body (limited company) – a body with separate existence from the individuals.

Unincorporated Associations

For most small groups a set of rules known as a constitution provides the appropriate legal status. This status means that groups can decide how they run their group for themselves.

The law looks on an unincorporated organisation as a collection of individuals which means it cannot in its own right:

- hold property
- enter into contracts
- Take part in a law suit

Its officers and committee members have to do things as individuals. If the organisation ends up owing money, they can be personally liable to meet any debts from their own pockets. This is called unlimited liability.

All the following have the legal status of an unincorporated association where committee members can be personally liable for any debts:

- Charitable trusts
- Friendly societies
- Registered charities which are not also registered as companies
- and unregistered voluntary and community associations (small groups)

Trusts

A charitable trust is a special kind of unincorporated association, set up to administer money or property (or both), and usually registered with the Charity Commission. Many trusts administer charitable bequests.

Some voluntary organisations choose to have trusts to hold property for them, or to administer large amounts of money.

A trust is set up by a legal document called a trust deed.

A model trust deed can be obtained free from the Charity Commission.

A trust is unincorporated and trustees are personally responsible for its actions and liable if it runs into debt. There are ways of limiting this. It is advisable to seek legal advice when the trust is set up.

Friendly Societies

Unincorporated associations with a benevolent or charitable purpose can register under the Friendly Societies Act. This has two main advantages. They can hold property through trustees, but avoid any legal problems when trustees resign or die. They can have charitable status without needing to register with the Charity Commission - though for tax purposes they need to submit their draft constitution to the Charities Division of the Inland Revenue.

Friendly Societies have to follow the Act over the contents of their rules, accounts and audit.

- They are accountable to the Registry of Friendly Societies and there is a registration fee.

Community Interest Companies (CICs)

CICs have been designed as a new form of limited company suitable for social enterprises. The assets of a CIC belong to the company rather than the members. This might be a suitable format for a trading arm of a charity, or for an organisation which wished to avoid the restrictions of charitable status.

- They are accountable to the [Department for Business Innovations and Skills](#)

Charitable Incorporated Organisations (CIOs)

CIOs are intended to offer a structure for a charity which has the advantages of incorporation in providing limited liability for the members, but is not subject to the regulation of both the Charity Commission and Companies House.

- They are accountable to Charity Commission.

Companies Limited by Guarantee

A company limited by guarantee does not have shares or shareholders, and cannot distribute profits. Instead its members, who pay a subscription, are each liable for a limited sum if the company is wound up (the guarantee). The members elect a board or

a committee or directors and can remove them, but the board has day-to-day control of affairs.

- The Registrar of Companies at Companies House.

Industrial and Provident Societies

These include co-operative societies for the mutual benefit of members, but also non-profit making organisations for the benefit of the community if they are carrying out an industry, business or trade. They must give all members an equal say in the running of the society.

- The Registrar of Industrial and Provident Societies is the Registry of Friendly Societies.

They can apply to the Inland Revenue Charities Division to be classed as charitable for tax purposes.

Charitable Status

Charities are exempt from most forms of direct taxation, and from stamp duty on legal documents. The non-domestic rates on their property are reduced by 80 per cent. Some sources of funding are only available to registered charities.

- An organisation can only register as a charity if the Charity Commission accepts that its aims or purposes are charitable.

This can be ascertained by writing to the Charity Commission. Charity is not a legal status!

Further Information

- [Community Matters](#)
- [Charity Commission](#)

Committee roles and responsibilities

What is a committee?

The committee manages and is responsible for the organisation. The committee is elected by members of the organisation. Depending on the type of organisation the structure of the committee may vary; types of committee include:

- Board of Trustees (Registered Charity)
- Board of Directors (Company Limited by Guarantee)
- Committee / Management Committee (Unincorporated Organisation)

How do committees work?

Committees are normally made up of between three and twelve people, and should meet regularly to make decisions about the direction of the organisation or group. It is possible to have more than twelve people on a committee, but the more people you have round the table, the more difficult it can become to reach agreement on decisions.

The committee is responsible for making sure that the organisation sticks to its aims and objectives as detailed in the Constitution. As committees have overall responsibility for the management of an organisation's affairs, committee members can face personal liability should things go wrong.

Additional responsibilities of a committee include:

- dealing with compliance issues (for example registered charities must follow Charity Law requirements and
- being accountable to stakeholders (for example, members, funders, service users, the wider community)

All committees need people with a mixture of skills to be able to meet their responsibilities. Many people choose to get involved because they want to give something back to their local community or support a good cause.

Roles within a committee

Most committees will contain a minimum of three positions; this is the minimum requirement for legal status of a charity. The most common positions are:

- Chair
- Treasurer
- Secretary

Some organisations will choose to have additional positions such as Vice-Chair, which will be laid out in the constitution.

Main duties of the Chair

The Chairperson of an organisation has three main elements to their remit:

- assisting with the managerial direction of the organisation
- planning and running meetings and
- acting as spokesperson or figurehead

If you are looking to recruit a new Chairperson, consider pulling together a Role Profile (a bit like a job description) if you do not already have one. You can use the headings above to structure the role profile, thinking of the individual tasks that have to be carried out under each one. It is always easier to recruit someone if you can be clear what the role responsibilities are.

Main duties of the Treasurer

The Treasurer also has three main areas of responsibility

- keeping an overview of the finances of the organisation
- reporting into committee meetings and
- making sure the organisation has the right financial policies and procedures in place

The exact duties will vary depending on whether or not the organisation employs staff. If an organisation is a registered charity, a company, or both, it must comply with specific financial regulations, which will have a bearing on the treasurer's role.

It is important to remember that while the Treasurer has a specific role in relation to money matters, the overall responsibility for financial management lies with the whole committee. A key part of the Treasurer's role involves reporting on finances and it is important that everyone around the table understands the financial information given.

Main duties of the Secretary

The Secretary's main responsibilities are:

- supporting the administration of the organisation and
- facilitating and supporting committee meetings

In small, volunteer-only groups, the Secretary's role is often crucial as they may have to deal with most of the paperwork. In larger organisations with company status, the Company Secretary is a formal position with specific legal responsibilities in relation to liaising with Companies House. For nearly all organisations, the Secretary also has specific duties in relation to notifying members about annual general meetings.

See our fact sheets on committee roles and responsibilities

And finally...

Your constitution will give guidance as to who is eligible to stand for membership of the committee.

It is important for all committees to consider how to attract new members on an ongoing basis. Many organisations now advertise using local newspapers and community websites when looking to recruit.

Constitutions

What is a constitution?

When you set up a group, you need to work out exactly what you want to do and how you will do it. This means setting out your aims and objectives, as well as rules on how to run your group.

The normal type of governing document for a small group is a constitution. A constitution sets up an association - a group of people who come together, democratically, with a specific aim. This group of members decides on a committee, and the committee is then responsible for running the organisation.

Why do you need a constitution?

You need a constitution so that:

- everyone knows exactly what your organisation aims to do
- everyone knows how your organisation will be run
- everyone knows who is responsible for running your organisation and
- you can apply for money to run your group (people will only give money to you if they are confident it will all be accounted for and spent properly)

What is in a constitution?

Your constitution will identify your organisation and lay out your aims and objectives. If you would like to apply for charitable status, then you should check the Charity Commission website to make sure that your charity name is not already in use.

Your constitution will also set out more general rules, most of which usually apply to any group. The rules which need to be included are:

- **Powers** – what you can legally do to carry out your activities - for example, by raising money or hiring a building
- **Membership** – who is eligible for membership, how people become members, and how people are disqualified (your group may have special rules on who is eligible to be a member)
- **Committees** – how and when the committee is elected, and which specific jobs need to be filled. The Charity Commission advises a minimum of three committee members should be on the committee

See our fact sheet on Committee roles and responsibilities

- **Annual General Meeting** – once a year your organisation will have a meeting for all its members when the committee is elected and the annual report presented.
See our fact sheet on Annual General Meetings
- Finance – rules on preparing annual accounts
- Changing the constitution – the procedure for altering any of your rules – this should be at a general meeting with an overall majority
- Dissolution – the procedure for closing down your organisation

How do we adopt our constitution?

The constitution must be adopted during a meeting and both signed and dated by committee members. The meeting must be minuted. At that point the constitution is officially 'adopted', making it a legal document. From then on your group is legally bound to be run according to the constitution.

Model constitutions

The following templates are available from Community First New Forest:

- Template for constitution for a voluntary organisation
- Small group constitution
- Terms of Reference

Further information

[Charity Commission](#)

[Charity Commission publication Choosing and Preparing a Governing Document \(CC22\) Governance and Organisational Structures produced by the Governance Hub and Co-operatives UK](#)

Finance

Financial rules

A set of basic rules to help your group be consistent in how you handle money and keep records

If your group is small, you will probably work together fairly informally and some of these rules may well be inappropriate. Even so, it's a good idea to have some rules, however few, so that everyone is clear about how to look after your group's money.

If your group is larger, then you will probably need more detailed procedures. You can use these basic rules as guidelines to draw up rules which are useful for your group.

If your group receives funding, the funder may have terms and conditions of their own about how the group's finances are handled.

As well as helping your group to function better, financial rules show funders and other bodies that your group is looking after its money well.

Your committee will need to decide details such as:

- the sort of financial records you will keep – account book, petty cash book, etc
- what bank or building society accounts you will hold, how many signatories you will have and who they will be
- how you will deal with petty cash and the amount of the float
- the maximum amount which can be paid out in cash
- whether there are certain small items which committee members may buy without going to a meeting for approval; and if so, the maximum amount of money that can be spent in this way
- the financial year (for example, if your accounts will run from 1st April to 31st March, from 1st January to 31st December, or on a different cycle)
- how often the treasurer will report to the committee, and whether you want verbal or written reports

Once your committee has agreed the rules, remember to give a copy to everyone who joins the committee.

For further information please see Community First New Forest's fact sheet on opening a bank account

What is a budget?

Budgeting as a group provides an opportunity for everyone to be involved in decisions about what to spend money on. This is really important for ensuring that everyone supports the financial decisions that are being made. Budgeting is a crucial way to stop your group running out of money unexpectedly, or ending up in debt.

Budgeting and financial planning is also essential for fundraising. See our Funding fact sheet.

- A budget tells the story, in money terms, of what your group plans to do over the coming year.
- It is an estimate of how much money you need – proper budgeting will help ensure that you don't run out of money or face unexpected costs during the year ahead.
- It will help you make financial decisions and keep control during the year.
- A budget for a funding bid may not be the same as your group's annual budget. If you are applying for a specific project (rather than a grant towards your overall work), the funder may ask for an outline budget only.
- A budget is always an internal document for your own group's use. You will not be held to it by a funder or some other outside body.

For further information please see Community First's fact sheet on Budgets

Funding Advice and Applications

Unless you're very unlucky, you should be able to get some help locally at no cost, though the quality of it may vary. Some advice and information may be worth paying for – it may be worth going on a training course, for instance, or buying a book. Just occasionally it may be worth spending money on a consultant to help you with your fundraising, but that certainly shouldn't be your first port of call. Because money is such a central problem for voluntary organisations and because successful fundraising is dependent upon so many other things – appropriate legal structure, effective management, competent accounting, not to mention knowing the right words to use, – it's hard to predict what information and which organisations should be listed as useful sources of help and advice. Only some of the sources listed below are likely to be appropriate for your group; don't think you have to explore all of them.

You can come to Community First New Forest for more detailed information, and we will be able to assist you with how and who to apply to. How to identify the right funders for you and who can carry out a funding search for you. You may write the best funding application in the world but all your hard work will be wasted if you send it to the wrong funder. You probably need to think about the *kind* of funder to approach and then use research tools to identify the specific funders to write to.

For further information please see Community First New Forest's fact sheet on Funding

Volunteers

Volunteers can add diversity, quality and efficiency to any organisation. They are a valuable resource bringing with them enthusiasm, skills and experiences, flexibility, fresh ideas and new ways of working. Whether you can use volunteers as a regular commitment, one-off, occasional or seasonal help, every volunteer has a unique contribution to make.

At our Volunteer Centre we can assist you in developing new volunteering opportunities. If you have not worked with volunteers before, or would like help in identifying and developing volunteer roles and opportunities, we can advise and support you with

- role descriptions
- person specifications
- volunteer recruitment
- what to expect from a referral from us
- how to welcome potential volunteers
- interview and selection procedure

For further information please see Community First New Forest's fact sheet on Volunteering

Insurance

The trustees or management committee members of a voluntary or community organisation have a duty to protect its people and property from risk. Taking out insurance is one of the ways in which you can carry out this duty, so that you can cover the cost of claims that could be made against your organisation, or replace your organisation's property if it is lost or damaged.

Some kinds of insurance are compulsory, so you have to have them to comply with the law (employers' liability insurance if you employ staff and motor insurance if you own or operate motor vehicles). Others, while not compulsory, might be advisable for you depending on your activities or whether you own property.

A robust risk assessment of all your activities will help you to identify any risk your organisation might face, and whether an insurance policy is the most effective way of managing that risk. Insurance cover should only be taken out if the level of risk, which is to be passed to the insurer, is worth the cost of the cover, unless it is a legal requirement.

For further information please see Community First New Forest's fact sheet on Insurance.

Policies

There are many policies and procedures that organisations can have. Some are required by law, some are commonly required by funders and others are chosen by the organisations themselves to help make sure that they fulfil their duties and that the organisation runs consistently, fairly and smoothly.

A very small voluntary organisation will often start with no more than two or three basic policies. However, most organisations need to adopt more policies as they expand and develop the work that they do, change how they do their work, and increase the scope of their good practice.

Review and Update

It is important to keep your policies and procedures under review. Your needs as an organisation might change, or the law might change, either of which might mean you need to adopt new policies or to update existing ones.

In particular, if you begin to employ staff, there will be several policies required by law, and several others it is wise to have.

Training and Induction

Policies and procedures are only effective if people know about them and know how to follow them. This means:

- Training people when a new policy is put in place
- Updating people when an existing policy is changed
- Making sure policies and procedures form part of the induction for all new trustees, volunteers or staff

What Policies Might We Need?

The policies and procedures you need are mainly determined by what your organisation does and how it works.

This document lists the more common policies organisations use. The list doesn't cover every policy an organisation might need, but it does list most of the policies small organisations typically have in place.

Adult Safeguarding

Social care plays an important role in helping people with care and support needs to live full lives, free from abuse and neglect. This includes preventing abuse, minimising risk

without taking control away from individuals, and responding proportionately if abuse or neglect has occurred.

Local authorities, care providers, health services, housing providers and criminal justice agencies are all important safeguarding partners.

The Care Act 2014 introduces new safeguarding duties for local authorities including: leading a multi-agency local adult safeguarding system; making or causing enquiries to be made where there is a safeguarding concern; hosting safeguarding adults boards; carrying out safeguarding adults reviews; and arranging for the provision of independent advocates.

Although it is important to tailor each policy to your own organisation's particular needs, there are models for many policies available online which you can use as a starting point. Community First New Forest will be able to help you with templates for the policies listed below.

Child & Young Person (CYP) Protection

Child protection is the process of protecting individual children identified as either suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect.

Safeguarding is a relatively new term and goes along with promoting overall welfare. It was brought into practice and guidance with the Childrens Act 2004 and is a much wider concept than child protection.

Child protection in effect forms a small part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. Safeguarding legislation and government guidance says that safeguarding means:

- protecting children from maltreatment
- preventing impairment of children's health or development
- ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care.
- taking action to enable all children and young people to have the best outcome

List of Commonly Required Policies for Small Organisations

All organisations:

- Equality and Diversity
- Financial Controls

Many organisations:

- Volunteer policy

- Health and Safety
- Confidentiality
- Data Protection
- Environmental
- Complaints

Organisations working with Children:

- Safeguarding of Children

Organisations working with Vulnerable Adults:

- Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults

Organisations with Employees:

If you employ staff you will need a number of policies, some of which are specifically required by law and you should take advice to make sure you develop and adopt everything you need. Employment related policies include:

- Grievance
- Disciplinary
- Health and Safety
- Capability
- Sickness and absence
- Parental leave – maternity / paternity
- Compassionate leave
- Whistleblowing
- Redundancy

Annual General Meetings

What is an Annual General Meeting?

An Annual General Meeting, commonly referred to as an AGM, is a formal meeting which is held once a year. It is a legal requirement for voluntary organisations that have company status. It is good practice for charities to have an AGM to act as a review of the year and deal with issues such as the election of committee/board members and reviewing the annual accounts. Each individual organisation should have a section of its Constitution which deals with AGMs, and this gives guidance as to how the AGM should be run and what matters should be dealt with. Although it is a formal meeting, it can also be a good opportunity to communicate with members, clients, partners and other interested parties.

For further information please see Community First New Forests Fact sheet How to run an AGM.