

Starting a Community Group

3. Governing Documents, Policies and Procedures

Governing documents, policies and procedures establish a framework for how a group operates, they:

- Define how a group manages itself
- Illustrate how a group meets its legislative and regulatory requirements
- Demonstrate to stakeholders and funders accountability and compliance
- Provide codes of conduct
- Set out how things should be done and what is expected

A governing document (referred to as a constitution, memorandum and articles of association or trust deed) sets out the rules by which an organisation will be governed.

A policy sets out how an organisation intends to conduct its services, activities or business, particularly in response to legal and regularly requirements.

A procedure defines how certain activities happen, these will show:

- Who does what
- The steps they need to take
- The supporting systems/documents they need to use

To ensure governing documents, policies, procedures and forms are appropriate and up to date. It is recommend you keep a document control sheet that lists all the documents you use.

Example Document Control Sheet

Title	Purpose of document	Signed off	Version	Review date
Constitution	Governance requirements for the group	01/01/2020	1.0	01/01/2024
Data Protection Policy	How the group meets data protection regulations	01/01/2020	1.0	01/01/2022
Membership Form	Application form for membership of group	01/01/2020	1.0	01/01/2022
Membership Procedure	Administration of membership application form	01/01/2020	1.0	01/01/2022

A Governing Document

The most important document for a community group is its governing document, it sets out the rules by which an organisation will run including:

- The name and purpose of the group
- The activities the group can be involved in
- Who will benefit from the groups work
- The geographic area the group will operate within
- Qualifications and application for membership
- Election, retirement and termination of the management committee and office bearers
- Powers of the management committee
- Rules for running meetings
- Financial requirements
- Winding down the organisation

It is the responsibility of the steering group to develop the groups governing document. The document should be a reflection of what people want to achieve and how they want to operate.

There are a number of governing document templates developed by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, these meet requirements of Charity and Company law and are supported by comprehensive guidelines, see <https://scvo.org.uk/setting-up-a-charity/write-your-constitution> for more information.

There are also standard templates available on the Companies House website see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/model-articles-for-private-companies-limited-by-guarantee> for more information.

A Mission Statement

Supporting the governing document, a mission statement is a short paragraph that gives a brief but clear definition of the group's aim and values. A well-defined mission statement will:

- Say what the organisation aims to do
- Identify who benefits from its activities
- Show how it will do it

A mission statement can help when you are promoting your idea to potential funders, supporters, beneficiaries and stakeholders.

Example Mission Statement

The 60+ club provides residents the opportunity to engage in regular social activity through the provision of a weekly lunch club, helping to reduce social isolation.

Policies and Procedures

It is important that everyone on your committee understands the value of having policies and procedures. They guide the culture of your organisation, ensure legal compliance and support good governance. Using a standard template will ensure your documents are easy to understand and consistent. A policy or procedure should include as the minimum:

- Title
- Statement of Purpose i.e. what is the document for and reason for having it (relevant legislation)
- Policy/Procedure details i.e. who will do what, what steps they need to take, which forms/documents to use etc.
- Sign off date
- Version number
- Organisation details including charity/company number and contact details

What Policies and Procedures do you need?

All community groups will have a governing document, in this there will be details about membership, committee management, meetings and other core rules for the running of an organisation. Supporting this there should be a suite of policies and procedures that show how an organisation operates including:

- Committee Roles and Responsibilities
- Committee Code of Conduct - including conflict of interest and expenses
- Membership Policy - including application, code of conduct, removal
- Data Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Safeguarding Policy (PVG/ Disclosure Scotland)
- Equality & Diversity Policy
- Financial Policy - including reserves
- Complaints Policy - internal and external
- Communications Policy - including social media
- Volunteer Policy including recruitment, expenses, insurance, management
- Volunteer role descriptions
- Volunteer agreements
- Employment Policies - including recruitment, equal opportunities, flexible working, development and training, leave (sickness, maternity leave, holiday pay)
- Disciplinary and Grievance Policy
- Lone worker Policy
- Adverse weather and travel disruption Policy
- Use of office equipment/ own equipment Policy

The extent these are used will depend on the size, legal structure and operations of your group. You can find help in writing policies from a number of online services including:

- Charity Trustee Duties from the OSCR website <https://www.oscr.org.uk/managing-a-charity/trustee-duties/> these will help to also inform best practice for organisations not a registered charity
- Data Protection from the ICO website <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/>
- Health and Safety policies and templates from the Health and Safety Executive website <http://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/index.htm>
- Volunteer Scotland website for volunteering policies and procedures <https://www.volunteerscotland.net/for-organisations/>
- ACAS support and templates for employers <https://www.acas.org.uk>

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