



Drafting your constitution

So, you've decided to set up a voluntary or community group to help meet a need in your local community. You can run as an informal group for a while but if you want to be more formal and apply for funding, you will need a constitution.

What is a constitution?

A constitution is a set of rules that lays out how you run your group. It sets out your group's aims, where it works, how it runs and how you manage your money. Your constitution is a legal document and you must follow it so it is important to get it right. This is where we can help.

How we can help

We use this form to gather information to help us write a constitution for your new voluntary or community group. We can also meet with you to go through the questions and the draft constitution to help you understand it.

What if you want to register as a charity?

If you already know that your group wants to register as a charity, you do not need to fill out this form. You should contact us, ask to speak with the Support and Development team and we will develop your constitution together. To register as a charity, your group must have exclusively charitable aims; be able to show that it is active and be able to show its activities are for the public benefit.

What do you need to do next?

Answer as many questions as you can. You may find it useful to discuss the questions with other members of your group. Don't worry about filling in all the gaps because we can talk about it when we meet. Add helpful notes if you wish and feel free to write "don't know" or "don't understand".

1. What is the name of your organisation?

Contact person

Address

Phone number

Email address

The information above will be added to our database so we can work with you. If you'd like to know more about this please ask. Once you have adopted your constitution, we will ask whether we can make your contact details publically available.

2. What does your organisation want to do?

What are the general aims of your organisation? Who do you want to help?

Have you checked that no other organisation is already doing the same work?

If you need more space, please use another text document. If you have any supporting information that will help explain your aims, please include it.

3. Where will your organisation work?

This is called your area of benefit. It could be one suburb or area of the city or the whole of Newcastle or a larger area such as the North east of England.

4. Powers

Your organisation needs to be able to carry out work to achieve its aims. The constitution will include the following powers, which are suitable for a small organisation:

- to employ and pay staff (even for a few hours)
- to insure the property and work of the organisation
- to cooperate with other organisations
- to raise funds and accept gifts

Please list any other powers your organisation will need

5. Membership

Who will be members of your organisation? You must keep a membership list. You also need to decide how people become members. Do they need to fill in a form?

Can anyone living in the area of benefit who supports the aims of your organisation be a member? Yes
No

If no, please say who you want it to be open to eg 'women only' for a women's organisation.

Can people under the age of 18 be members of your organisation? Yes
People under the age of 18 are not eligible to be on the committee of a
voluntary organisation. No

Will members have to pay a membership fee? Yes or
maybe
No

6. General meetings

General meetings must be open to all members.

The constitution describes the process of holding your annual general meeting (which must be held) and other general meetings (which may be held if you need to)

7. Management committee

The management committee is responsible for managing the organisation

How many committee members do you need? The constitution will say the minimum number of committee members is three and the maximum is ten.

If you want a different minimum and/or maximum, please state how many you need.

Minimum

Maximum

8. Finances

Most funders of voluntary and community organisations have strict rules to make sure their money is not wasted so to make sure the constitution will support your funding applications it will say

- all funds must be paid into a bank or building society account in the name of the organisation.
- all transactions, including cheques, on the account must be signed by two signatories authorised by the committee.
- no committee members can be employed by the organisations or receive any payment from its funds except for reasonable out of pocket expenses.
- all funds raised for and belonging to the organisation can only be used to achieve the organisation's aims.

9. Changing the constitution

This section describes how you change the constitution in the future, however once you have agreed it you should not need to change it without a good reason.

10. Closing the organisation

This section describes how you close the organisation and what happens to any money and other assets left. This will say that any money and other assets will be given to another voluntary organisation or charity with similar aims to your organisation. You are not allowed to share the money between the members or the management committee members.

11. Adopting the constitution

This section gives space for the first committee members to sign the constitution to create the organisation .

Find out more

If you would like to find out more about how we can support your organisation, please visit our website or alternatively email or phone us for more information:

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