Policies and Procedures

A clear, appropriate set of policies and procedures will help ensure that your organisation is well run. Policies and procedures set out how a community organisation should be run; one of the most important ways a management committee can oversee the delegation of its work is via written policies and procedures. The specific policies and procedures you need vary according to the size of your organisation and the services you provide.

Why you need written policies and procedures

The main reasons for having written policies and procedures are:

The law

Some written policies are required by law. In other cases, such as recruitment of staff or managing your finances, you will need to meet certain legal obligations. An equal opportunities policy and a financial policy can help ensure you meet these obligations. Even your governing document will set out certain procedures for holding meetings, keeping accounts etc. which your organisation must follow.

Best practice

Policies and procedures provide appropriate controls, including a framework for delegation by the board of trustees to staff or volunteers that sets out how things should be done and what is expected of people. Most community organisations find ways of working which best suit them. Written procedures can help to ensure that good practice is not forgotten and that new people know what are the accepted processes.

Transparency and accountability

They ensure that the board of trustees conducts the work of the charity appropriately.

Fairness

Community organisations want to ensure they are open to all potential users or members who might benefit from their services. A written equal opportunities policy can demonstrate your commitment to others and provide a useful basis for considering how best to provide services.

Resolving disputes

Written policies and procedures can be referred to if disputes arise over the way a particular function is carried out or responsibility exercised.

Demonstrating professionalism

External organisations, such as commissioning bodies or funders, will want to see that you have policies and procedures in place.

Ensure your policies are clear, simple statements of how your organisation intends to conduct its services, actions or business and provide a set of guiding principles to help with decision

making. Policies don't need to be long or complicated – a couple of sentences may be all you need for each policy area.

Policies and their accompanying procedures will vary between organisations because they reflect the values, approaches and commitments of a specific organisation and its culture. But they share the same role in guiding your organisation.

What is a good policy?

A good policy:

- Is easily understood and written in plain, jargon-free English

- Has a definite purpose for its creation

- Is linked to your organisation's strategy

- Is flexible and can adapt to change and be amended if needed

- Is communicated to all relevant people

How to go about developing policies and procedures

You may be able to save time by looking at other organisation's policies or templates as a starting point. Be sure to check they are appropriate for your organisation and make sure you adapt them for your own circumstances. You should also check that the policies you adopt respect your organisation's values as set in your governing document.

Suggested Core Policies

Essential: Health & Safety

Organisations with five or more paid staff are required by law to have a written health and safety policy, although it is good practice for all groups to have one anyway. The policy sets out your responsibilities to staff, volunteers and service users and its contents will vary from group to group, depending on the type of work the group does and the potential risks involved. In addition, the current legislation with regards to fire safety states that a designated 'responsible person' must carry out a fire safety risk assessment and implement and maintain a fire management plan.

Common Policies and Procedures

- Safeguarding policy for children and young people and/or vulnerable adults (if applicable)

- Data Protection policy and Privacy Statement

- Equality & Diversity policy (with particular regard to anti-discrimination and harassment of employees and volunteers as well as service users)

- Finance policy (including a financial procedures manual and a reserves policy)

- Board basics, including:

  - Trustee Code of Conduct

- Conflict of interest policy
- Trustee Expenses policy

Other Common Policies and Procedures

The following areas are some of the more common polices that would benefit from being written down. You don't necessarily need to adopt all the policies listed below and there may be other specific policies you need that are not listed. This is something the trustee board must decide.

- Anti-harassment and bullying
- Communications policy
- Complaints policy (for members, service users, supporters and/or public)
- Disciplinary procedure
- Equal opportunities
- Fundraising and donations acceptance and refusal policy
- Grievance procedure
- Induction and training of trustees policies
- Information retention policy
- Media policy (who can speak for the organisation)
- Recruitment and selection policy for volunteers
- Use of IT equipment policy
- Volunteer policy
- Whistleblowing

Organisations employing or intending to employ staff

Your organisation will be affected by a number of legislative provisions in relation to employment law, which can be very complex, and which must be abided by. You need to consider developing written policies and procedures to cover the following areas:

- Recruitment
- Induction process
- Office standards
- Hours, leave and pay
- Performance appraisal
- Sickness
- Working alone
- Working for external organisations
- Disciplinary and grievance

Implementation

Once you have developed and approved your written policies and procedures

Remember to:

- Use them (don't file them away and forget about them)
- Make sure that everyone who needs to know about them is aware of their existence
- Monitor their relevance and effectiveness (if they are proving unworkable, change them)
- Review and update them on a regular basis (say every two or three years) to take account of changes in the way your group works, or changes in legislation, or new and more effective ways of working

Getting further support

This fact sheet gives a brief description of the main policy areas you should consider. However, it is for guidance only and not intended to be a definitive list of all policies available.

Northumberland Community Voluntary Action (Northumberland CVA) has access to a wide range of resources and model policy documents to help you draft appropriate policies and procedures. For more information, advice and support visit www.northumberlandcva.org.uk, email enquire@northumberlandcva.org.uk or call 01670 858688.