

# Northumberland **FACT** Sheet



*working together for the voluntary & community sector in Northumberland*

## Policies and Procedures

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 varies according to the size of your organisation and the services you provide.

### **Why you need written policies and procedures**

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**

Most community organisations find ways of working which best suit them. Written procedures can help to ensure that these are not forgotten and that new people know what these are.

#### **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.

## **How to go about developing policies and procedures**

The easiest place to start is to get copies of model documents and adapt them. Your local voluntary sector development agency (LDA) will be able to help with appropriate model policies for most areas concerning Voluntary and Community Sector organisations.

### **Governing document**

Your governing document is your most important policy document. It states your objectives, the

powers your organisations has, the way your management committee is elected and how the decision making process is conducted at meetings

### **Standing orders**

Covering procedural matters not covered by the constitution and can be useful as you don't need to change your governing document every time you change the way you conduct your meetings

### **Health and safety including fire risk assessment**

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. The policy sets out your responsibilities to staff, volunteers and service users. The contents of a policy 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.

### **Equal opportunities**

Your equal opportunities policy should cover issues of fairness, whether to service users, members, employees, volunteers, or committee members. Key areas are

- **Employment** - your equal opportunities policy should cover all aspects of recruitment and selection of paid workers to ensure the process is fair and complies with the law. You would also want these principles to apply to the recruitment of volunteers and committee members.
- **Service provision** - how you will publicise and provide services with the aim that all people who might benefit are able to do so and how you run them.

### **Financial controls policy**

Your financial controls will set out your policies regarding the financial controls you have in place to enable you to manage your money. It would usually cover day to day issues such as banking arrangements, procedures for ordering and paying for goods and services, use of petty cash and trustee and volunteer expenses.. It would also cover financial management issues such as preparing an annual budget and reporting to the committee on the group's financial position.

### **Safeguarding policies**

If your organisation is working with children or vulnerable adults you will need a written safeguarding policy including your Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) procedures and a clear system for recording and reporting any concerns.

### **Confidentiality policy including data protection**

All organisations that keep any information on living and identifiable people must comply with the Data Protection Act. The Act applies to computerised personal information and some manual records that may be held. It is your responsibility when collecting the data to inform the individuals about how the information is to be used.

### **Complaints procedure**

Complaints, whether justified or not, are bound to happen from time to time. It helps to have a standard procedure in use which is seen to be fair by all concerned. Typically this would include how service users can make a complaint and to whom it should be addressed, the procedure for looking into the complaint and how the matter can be reviewed if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome.

You may also need to consider developing policies to cover the following subjects if appropriate for your organisation and activities:

- Use of IT equipment policy
- Volunteer policy

- Communications policy
- Conflicts of interest policy
- Induction and training of trustees policy

## 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

## Once you have developed and approved your written policies and procedures

- 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

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.

Your local development agency (LDA) 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 contact the LDA covering your area.

For rural Northumberland contact:

### Community Action Northumberland

UNIUN Enterprise Building Front Street Pegswood Morpeth  
Northumberland NE61 6RG  
Tel: 01670 517 178 Fax: 01670 511 400  
Website: [www.ca-north.org.uk](http://www.ca-north.org.uk) email: [info@ca-north.org.uk](mailto:info@ca-north.org.uk)

Registered Company No 7805401 Registered Charity No's 1144604 / 224798

For Blyth, Cramlington and Seaton Valley contact:

### Community & Voluntary Action Blyth Valley

22 Beaconsfield Street Blyth Northumberland NE24 2DP  
Tel: 01670 353 623 Fax: 01670 365 783  
Website: [www.cvabv.org.uk](http://www.cvabv.org.uk) email: [info@cvabv.org.uk](mailto:info@cvabv.org.uk)

Registered Company No 5860971 Registered Charity No 1116430

For Ashington, Bedlington and Newbiggin by the Sea contact:

### Wansbeck Centre for Voluntary Service

107 & 109 Station Road Ashington Northumberland NE63 8RS  
Tel: 01670 858 688 Fax: 01670 784 160  
Website: [www.wansbeckcvs.org.uk](http://www.wansbeckcvs.org.uk) email: [enquire@wansbeckcvs.org.uk](mailto:enquire@wansbeckcvs.org.uk)

Registered Company No 5980151 Registered Charity No 1119404



Information published to our knowledge is correct. Community Action Northumberland, Community & Voluntary Action Blyth Valley and Wansbeck Centre for Voluntary Service accept no responsibility for any inaccuracy in, or complaint arising from, items in this FACT Sheet.



*working together for the voluntary & community sector in Northumberland*