

Your role as a committee member

Each voluntary and community organisation has a group of people that is responsible by law for running the organisation and making sure it does what it sets out to do. This is known as the governing body.

The governing body can be called the management committee, executive committee, board of trustees, board of directors or something else. The name is not that important, what is important is that the governing body is legally and financially responsible for running the organisation.

In this information sheet we will use the terms management committee and management committee members.

Who are management committee members?

These are the people on the management committee, and they are usually elected by the organisation's members at the annual general meeting.

Your governing document (constitution, mem and arts, or trust deed) will tell you how the election is carried out. It also sets out how long people can be on the management committee, how often the management committee must meet and other rules about how the management committee works.

If your organisation is a registered charity, all management committee members are known as trustees. If your organisation is

a company, they are known as company directors. If your organisation is a charitable company, they are both charity trustees and company directors but are usually known as trustees.

What is your role as a management committee member?

As with any role, it is important to understand what you have to do to be able to do your job properly. The main areas are:

- ✓ Leading the organisation - setting and planning the strategy and what the organisation does
- ✓ Being accountable - to its users, members and others
- ✓ Legal responsibilities - keeping within the law and following your constitution
- ✓ Managing people - making sure staff and volunteers are well supported and supervised
- ✓ Managing resources - managing money, property and other resources properly
- ✓ Managing the management committee - making sure the committee works well and management committee members are trained and involved

Leading the organisation

- ✓ Make sure you, and the management committee as a group, act in the best

interests of the organisation and the people it is set up to support

- ✓ Work with the other management committee members to set your organisation's vision, mission and values, and make sure the organisation sticks to them
- ✓ Work with the other management committee members to write your organisation's strategic plan, which can also be called a business or development plan. The plan sets out what your organisation will do over the next two to five years including the services it will offer and how it will improve how the organisation works. It can help to keep your organisation on track and explain to others what you are doing and why
- ✓ Make sure the organisation is open equally to everyone and that you do not discriminate against anyone
- ✓ Promote the organisation and its work

Being accountable

- ✓ Make sure the organisation is accountable to its members and to the community. You can do this by communicating regularly with your users, members, funders and the council; asking your users and members what services they want and need; and producing your annual accounts and report

Legal responsibilities

- ✓ Understand the constitution and make sure all the rules in it are followed
- ✓ Understand the legal structure of your organisation and your personal liability. You should also check every few years if the legal structure needs to change for example become a company or register as a charity

- ✓ Keep the organisation within the law and provide a safe and healthy place for people to be in. If you are a registered charity, you also need to comply with charity law. If you are a company, you need to comply with company law
- ✓ Set policies and procedures to set out how your organisation will work so it works well and keeps within in the law. If your organisation has staff or volunteers, you can ask them to draft policies and procedures but it is your job to formally agree them and to check they are still current.

Every organisation should have the following policies and procedures: equality and diversity; finance; health and safety; confidentiality; data protection; and, complaints. If you have staff, you may also need policies and procedures for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults; volunteering; risk; and, reserves

Managing people

- ✓ Act in a fair and responsible way to staff and volunteers and make sure you follow employment law
- ✓ Work in partnership with staff and volunteers so they can get on with their jobs. You can do this by having clear job descriptions for staff; being clear with staff and volunteers about your role and their role; being clear about who makes decisions; and having a clear induction process
- ✓ Select, manage and support the chief officer or other senior staff member

Managing resources

- ✓ Make sure the money is spent properly so it is only used for the purpose for which it

was given and only on your organisation's objects (as set out in your constitution). You can do this by asking one of the management committee members to be treasurer and asking them to give the management committee reports on the finances every three months. It is the responsibility of all management committee members to understand the finances and to question anything that does not look right

- ✓ Make sure that the organisation has the right resources - people, money, equipment, premises and insurance - to do its job properly
- ✓ Monitor how well the organisation is doing its job and take action when things are not going well

Managing the management committee

- ✓ Make sure the whole management committee understands its role and the role of the chair, secretary and treasurer. You can do this by writing role descriptions for committee members and for the chair, secretary and treasurer. You should also have an induction for new management committee members
- ✓ Make sure the management committee is made up of a mix of people with the right skills, knowledge and experience to do their jobs properly. You should also agree how you will recruit new management committee members
- ✓ Make sure the management committee works well so it makes good decisions. You can do this by holding enough meetings each year to run the organisation well; having a process for dealing with conflicts of interest; and, preparing well for meetings and taking an active part in them

- ✓ Agree how sub-committees are set up in your organisation. Sub-committees can help reduce pressure on the management committee, make it easier for work to be done in small groups and involve other members of the organisation and staff. The management committee has the final responsibility for the organisation so you need to be clear about decisions a sub-committee can and can't make and how it reports back to the management committee
- ✓ Make sure the management committee gets the training and development it needs. You should start this by having an induction for new management committee members and looking at your training needs

What are your personal responsibilities?

As an active management committee member, you must:

- ✓ Attend meetings regularly and arrive on time or send apologies if you can't attend
- ✓ Work as part of a team and take an active part in meetings
- ✓ Read meeting minutes and other papers and prepare for meetings
- ✓ Keep to the point when talking in meetings
- ✓ Support each other, listen to others and try not to interrupt
- ✓ Ask if you don't understand or need more information
- ✓ Carry out what you have agreed to do
- ✓ Make sure decisions are made in a democratic way and agree to keep to decisions made by the group

- ✓ Be non-discriminatory and promote equality and diversity
- ✓ Take part in training and development to help you be a strong committee member

Help from Newcastle CVS

We can help you with all of the issues in this information sheet:

- ✓ Information on the role of the chair, secretary and treasurer
- ✓ Example role descriptions for management committee members

- ✓ Example policies and procedures
- ✓ Information sheets on other useful subjects for the voluntary and community sector
- ✓ Training for your management committee on your roles and responsibilities
- ✓ Support writing your strategic plan

Other support or resources

- ✓ *The essential trustee: what you need to know* by Charity Commission

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Newcastle CVS
Higham House
Higham Place
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8AF

Contact us: 0191 235 7037
information@cvsnewcastle.org.uk
www.cvsnewcastle.org.uk



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