

# Starting a 'Small Community Group' a simple guide

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This guide was written by 4CT Limited with the support of Macc



## Contents

This guide is intended to provide information to help you to set up a small unincorporated community organisation. As a guide it does not contain information for all circumstances and some information may change over time. You are always advised to seek further clarification from a suitably qualified and independent body such as your local CVS (in Manchester this is Macc. Macc's service website is [www.manchestercommunitycentral.org](http://www.manchestercommunitycentral.org)). Please see appendix C for details of some recommended independent advice services.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

**This pack has been produced by 4CT and Macc to provide the basic resources you need to establish a simple unincorporated<sup>1</sup> community group – this might be a tenant and resident group, a ‘Friends Of’ group or a community group such as a gardening group for your neighbourhood.**

Community groups are set up for lots of different purposes. They usually start as a small, informal group of people with a common goal. Groups may support a specific larger purpose and usually want to improve things in their local community or community of interest. This guide is intended for not-for-profit groups where any money received by the group is reinvested in the group to further its aims.



Examples include:

- FRIENDS of a church or other faith group – they might work to raise funds to support particular groups of people in the local community, such as the elderly or those in poverty
- FRIENDS of a park or public space
- Grassroots youth COMMUNITY GROUP – they might work to deliver homework clubs and other activities to help young people

COMMUNITY GROUPS and FRIENDS OF groups enable people to work together, but outside of the formal structure of a school, political party or council. These groups work to raise funds, volunteer, meet, socialise and achieve positive things for their community of interest or location. A Friends Group or other community group is independent of the council but will often work in partnership with their local council.

An ‘unincorporated association’ is an organisation set up through an agreement between a group of people who come together for a reason other than to make a profit (for example, a voluntary group or a sports club).

You don’t need to register an unincorporated association, and it doesn’t cost anything to set one up.

In an unincorporated association, individual members are personally responsible for any debts and contractual obligations. We will discuss this further in the guide – see section 10.

Unincorporated associations are either charitable (usually small and unregistered charities) or they are non-charitable. Charitable or non-charitable status is determined in a number of ways and your governing document reflects this. It is important to know if your group is or isn’t charitable; although small charities aren’t required to register with the Charity Commission, they are still charities and have to act accordingly. Being registered isn’t what makes a group a charity, but it does confirm charitable status. If you are unsure, please seek further help in writing your constitution and setting up your group.

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<sup>1</sup> UNINCORPORATED – this means that your group is not recognised in law as a ‘corporate body’.

## 2. INTERESTED IN STARTING A SMALL COMMUNITY GROUP?

### FOR EXAMPLE – SETTING UP A FRIENDS OF YOUR LOCAL PARK GROUP

Local people getting together and working towards achieving common goals form FRIENDS OF PARKS Groups. These groups usually represent people working collectively in a specific park.

The Friends of a Park group may start to tackle a specific issue (such as a playground needing new equipment) but often take on a wider range of things (environmental issues, events etc); they also provide an opportunity for local people to have a say in any developments and activities, which may be going on in their park.

#### **Getting started:**

First of all, you need to listen to the ideas and views of people around you. Ask others if they are interested in starting a group. Once a few people are interested, get together and share ideas. Initially, the discussions may highlight the problems in the park and suggested solutions; it will be useful to keep a written record of issues raised.

It will be useful to check if there is already a park group locally and to contact your local parks officer, you can email: [parks@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:parks@manchester.gov.uk) to find out about this.

It will also be useful to speak to your Park Ranger. They can provide you with help and support setting up your group. They can help you 'affiliate' your group – keeping it separate to the council and may be able to offer additional help such as standard risk assessments and access to insurance.

Your Park Ranger can help you make contact with other relevant council departments.

If your group is not a 'Friends of Park' group you may still be able to get assistance from your Neighbourhood Officer.

#### **Involving more people:**

*IT IS BEST TO HOLD A PUBLIC MEETING TO LAUNCH THE GROUP AND PROMOTE INTEREST IN IT.*

By holding a Public Meeting you will be able to let everyone living in your area know that you intend setting up a group. It provides a good opportunity for everyone to have their say about the issues that affect them.

Everyone living within the boundary of the area you intend to cover should be invited to your Public Meeting and be given an opportunity to join the association committee. Usually everyone living within the groups identified boundary will be able to be a member of the group

#### **Organising your Public Meeting**

##### **Deciding where to meet:**

Try and make it easy for people to attend – use the local church hall, school, community centre, youth club, and private room in a pub, library, or housing office. Ask your Neighbourhood Officer or local councillor for information about places to meet. Ask a few people interested in getting the group together to find out about meeting places.

**You need to know:**

- Dates and times when the venue is available
- How much it will cost to hire?
- Are there facilities to put on refreshments, tea and biscuits will do
- Is there space for crèche or a place for the children to play?
- You may need to arrange transport/escorts for elderly people to get to meetings
- Remember the meeting place should be as conveniently situated as possible
- You also need to consider whether the meeting place has:
  - Steps or you can borrow a ramp
  - Access for wheelchair users and people with prams
  - Adequate lighting
  - Accessible toilets
  - Heating, especially in winter

**The best time to meet:**

- Most groups meet in the evening, though some prefer daytime meetings. You may need to hold two meetings at different times of the day to involve everyone
- Avoid times which clash with other meetings or events taking place in the area otherwise some members of the public may miss the opportunity to attend your meeting

**Who to invite:**

Your first public meeting is very important. If you feel you need support you can invite your local Neighbourhood Officer who will be on hand to offer you advice. It can help to have a local Councillor or a representative of other local groups in attendance to talk about the advantages of forming a group. If there is a particular local issue (e.g. fly tipping in your area) you could organise your meeting around that specific topic and invite someone from the relevant council department.

***Remember...whatever the purpose of your local community group:***

- Involve as many people as possible
- Organise a public meeting if possible to get others involved
- Give Councillors and other guests as much notice as possible and ask them to confirm in writing that they are able to attend
- Let invited guests know what you want to discuss, so that they can bring with them relevant information.
- Contacts for Manchester City Council Offices, Council Departments and Services can be found on the website [www.manchester.gov.uk](http://www.manchester.gov.uk)

If you are uncertain whom to contact, your local Councillor can advise on the following:

- Letting people know about the meeting:
  - Leafletting is the most common way of informing people about meetings. Think about the information you want to put on the leaflet, details should include those invited, where the meeting is taking place, the time and date and what it is about.
  - Local posters and use local noticeboards
  - You might want to utilise social media, post on local sites and ask other people to post on Facebook, Twitter etc.

**Points to remember:**

- Don't post the leaflets too soon, people will forget about the meeting or throw the leaflet away, one week prior to the meeting is usually about the right time
- Keep the leaflet simple and informative, short and to the point
- Try and follow up your leaflet with a door knocking exercise to remind people of the meeting, closer to the time
- It may help to include a map showing where the meeting will take place

**Design and printing:**

Once you have an idea of how your leaflet needs to look and the information you need to include on it, speak to the Park Ranger for your area, they may be able to help you design your leaflet on a computer giving it a professional look. You may be able to get assistance from another local group (such as a community centre) with design and printing.

If you have the facilities to design your own leaflet your Neighbourhood Officer may be able to organise having copies made once it is complete.

**The Public Meeting:**

- Before the Meeting: you need to decide who is going to run the meeting. Ask your Neighbourhood Officer or Councillor for help and advice about this.
- Draw up an agenda before the meeting: it can be flexible to allow the meeting to develop naturally. For example:
  - Introduction and apologies – *Who's who and who couldn't make it.*
  - What is a group about – *How and why people get together*
  - Priorities for your group – *What it is you want to do, discuss some of the issues that people are concerned about*
  - General question time
  - Election of a committee
  - Date of next meeting

**Some useful tips:**

- Identify tasks: note taking, time keeping, tea making, and clearing up afterwards. Make sure that someone will do each job.
- Get to the meeting place early: to put out chairs, check that everything is all right. Make sure the heating is on in winter etc.
- Ask someone to stand outside: to show people in and make them feel welcome.
- Record attendance: by passing round a sheet of paper and asking everyone to write their name and address down. This will enable you to contact them with notes of the meeting and details of future meetings.
- Keep to the Agenda: however, allow people to have their say. Keep a check on the time; meetings should not usually last for more than 2 hours.
- Do not finish too late: make sure everything is tidy and return the key if necessary.
- If you decide to form a committee, get together at the end of the meeting and decide when you are going to meet next.

### **The next meeting:**

If everything went well and you decide to have another meeting, remember to check you can use the meeting room again.

If you did not have as many people as you thought you might....*DO NOT BE DISHEARTENED – it can take time for a new group to develop.*

Check back through this booklet to see if you covered everything. Particularly, **Publicity and Timing**. You may need to knock on some doors to establish whether people knew about the meeting, and if so, why they chose not to attend.

### **Interpreter / signer**

If you feel it would be helpful to have interpreters to translate for people whose first language is not English, ask for advice prior to the meeting. You may also require a signer for people who are hard of hearing.

### **Translations**

If there are people from Ethnic Minority Groups living in your area, it is important you circulate and display translated information in the appropriate languages. You can get advice about this from your local Neighbourhood Officer or Councillor.

### **Funding**

Your group may be able to apply for NIF (Neighbourhood Investment Funding). Please contact your local Neighbourhood Officer or Councillor, email: [NIF@manchester.gov.uk](mailto:NIF@manchester.gov.uk) to discuss how your proposal will contribute to the Ward Plan and/or Ward Climate Plan.

### **Training for new groups**

There are lots of Training Courses available for committee members who are interested in learning new skills for more information [Get help developing your voluntary or community organisation | Funding available for voluntary and community groups | Manchester City Council](#)

Once you have established your group, decide amongst yourselves who should attend training courses. There should be something available to suit everyone.

### **General support**

There is always someone around to help out with any problem that you face as a group. Help and assistance is only a phone call away!

Think about resources in your locality such as:

- Libraries
- Schools
- Council offices
- Community Centres
- Other local groups
- Your local CVS: for Manchester this is Macc and visit their website: [Welcome to Manchester Community Central](#)

### 3. ADOPTING A CONSTITUTION

It is necessary that all groups applying for funding adopt a Constitution or *Set of Rules*. This is also known as a governing document.

The type of constitution you use will be based on your activities, needs and legal structure. To establish a simple (probably non-charitable) group you can just have a simple set of rules as per the example in **APPENDIX A**.

If you want your small group to be charitable (even if it is small and not registered with the Charity Commission) you can use a 'model' document – this is a template and examples are shown on the Charity Commission website: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/setting-up-a-charity-model-governing-documents](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/setting-up-a-charity-model-governing-documents)

You can also get further information on types of structures from:  
<https://mycommunity.org.uk/choosing-the-right-organisational-structure-for-your-group>

If in doubt please seek advice from a trusted independent source. It is really important to establish your group as effectively as possible in the first instance – this will prevent problems in the future!

The following is a list of the basic requirements of what to include in your constitution:

- The name of the Association or Group
- The area the group intends to represent
- Who can be a member – do you want to have a membership?<sup>2</sup>
- The make-up of the committee and how often it shall meet
- How and when the Annual General Meetings are to be held
- What is the quorum is for meetings (quorum means how many committee members must be present to make a decision/vote)
- How monies raised shall be spent
- What happens if the group needs to wind up (close/dissolve)
- An equal opportunities clause

Appendix A has an example constitution.

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<sup>2</sup> If you set up an a Charitable Incorporated Organisation or CIO you will need to consider whether or not you have a wider membership (an Association model) or limit membership to Trustees only (a Foundation model) – seek some advice if you need to know more on this subject.



## 4. HOW TO FORM A COMMITTEE

Most groups find it useful to appoint at least a:

- **Chairperson**
- **Vice chair**
- **Secretary**
- **Treasurer**



If there are others willing to take on a role on the committee, there are other positions that can be filled such as Publicity Co-ordinator, Refreshments Officer, or Key Holder.

It isn't necessary to fill all these positions, but having a full committee helps to spread out the workload and can improve the performance of the group, particularly if people with suitable skills are elected to the relevant posts.

It is worth considering the duties involved with each position when selecting the committee. Keep in mind that everyone on the committee should be active. Each person should be able to attend the meetings and be able and willing to contribute to committee decision making.

### **Meeting as a committee**

As a committee you will need to meet on a regular basis to discuss how the group can represent its members.

The committee also has a responsibility to keep its members informed about what is happening locally.

The committee should keep a suitable record of who is a member and refresh this annually with the membership so that it stays up to date. You will need to know who your members are and how to contact them if asking them to attend and vote at your \*AGM! (See section 9 for AGM information.)

The committee have a very important role in welcoming new members and recruiting and retaining volunteers. Many groups say that initial enthusiasm might not be maintained if only a few people stay actively involved, groups suggest:

- Have sub-groups / small sub-committees who can work on specific projects
- Do an annual 'recruitment' campaign
- Keep people up to date via social media
- Get help and support from other groups

## **5. CHAIRPERSON AND VICE CHAIR**

### **The Chairperson**

There are two basic jobs a chairperson should do:

- Guide the group to achieve its aims
- Chair the meetings of the group

Outside meetings, they should:

- Be aware of all the activities carried out by the group
- Ensure other officers are carrying out their tasks
- Ensure the whole committee takes responsibility for financial decisions (certain tasks may be delegated to a Treasurer but the responsibility stays with the committee)
- Prepare the agenda for meetings (with the Secretary)
- Attend outside meetings on behalf of the group
- Be an ambassador for the group

**Good chairing is very often the key to making meetings work.**

The Chairperson has a variety of roles in the meetings, they should:

- Introduce and summarise the purpose of the meeting
- Introduce each item on the agenda, giving the necessary background information
- Summarise the points made in the discussions and encourage decision making
- Stop people talking for too long and from going off the point
- Make sure everyone in the meeting at least gets a chance to participate and be heard
- Be positive and help the group find solutions

### **The Vice Chair**

The Vice Chair provides administrative support for the Chair and stands in for the Chair when necessary.

The Vice Chair also represents the views of the group in the other meetings.

### **Help and advice**

If you need any further assistance or clarification on committee roles or volunteer roles, you can contact Macc for support.

## 6. ROLE OF THE SECRETARY

The Secretary's main role is to keep people informed and involved in the group's activities. If it is possible it can be useful to appoint both a Minutes Secretary and a Correspondence Secretary.



### The Minutes Secretary

- Takes minutes of meetings (minutes are a written record of decisions made and points discussed)
- Let people know when and where the next meeting is, and distributes the agenda
- Helps to prepare the agenda for meetings with the chairperson

### The Correspondence Secretary

- Writes and receives letters on behalf of the group
- Keeps a record of membership and important phone numbers
- Keeps members informed of what correspondence has been sent out and received

## 7. ROLE OF THE TREASURER

### The Treasurer

The main duties of the Treasurer include:

- Paying money received by the group into the group account
- Paying any bills incurred by the group
- Keeping records of income and expenditure
- Keeping petty cash and records of the day to day expenditure
- Preparing statements to the committee and for the Annual General Meeting
- It may also include applying for grants on behalf of the group



Although your group is unlikely to handle a huge amount of money, it may receive public money and this money has to be accounted for carefully.

### To run the group finances well, the Treasurer needs to:

- Be able to add up columns of figures with or without a calculator
- Be reasonably disciplined and well organised about keeping records
- Be willing to accept training, if required, relating to simple book keeping
- Be pro-active in sharing the group's financial information and position with the committee

The key to being a good Treasurer is to do little and often. They will not need to spend lots and lots of time on bookkeeping, but will need enough time to keep records up to date. The Treasurer must always write things down as they pay them in or out, otherwise a delay may result in things being forgotten and this can lead to problems when the books are checked.

Make sure the group's Treasurer speaks to the Macc team if there is anything they are unsure of. Macc can provide advice, guidance and resources to get started and to manage the role well.

### **Bank account**

It can be difficult to open a new bank account but lots of groups do it successfully. Some banks offer a 'club, community or society' account which can be useful. You will need each signatory to provide identification and they will be identity and credit checked by the bank. You will need at least two and ideally three signatories and who are unrelated by marriage, civil partnership, family, etc.

Whilst you are waiting for your bank to set up your account you may be able to have any funds held by an existing local group.

## **8. MINUTE TAKING**

### **Why have Minutes?**

Every committee needs to know what decisions it has made.

Minutes are useful for members who missed the meeting, members who were at the meeting but forgot bits of it, and any invited guests. The whole committee will be able to use minutes in the future when there may be questions and confusion about what was decided in the past.



It is worth pointing out that funding organisations often use a group's minutes as a way of assessing how a group is operating, when making funding recommendations. This cannot be done if the minutes do not give an accurate record of committee and public meetings, or if the meetings themselves do not appear to be addressing appropriate issues or making clear decisions.

### **So who should take the Minutes**

Usually the secretary of a group will take the minutes. Some committees share their work by having a **minutes secretary** as well as a correspondence secretary who deals with correspondence. There is no rule, just a need for the person taking minutes to know what's expected of them, and to produce an accurate record of the meeting.

It is important to realise that the minute-taker's job is just to record the main points of the meeting. They don't need to record everything that is said. It is the Chair's job to see that the meeting is conducted properly, addresses appropriate issues and that the minute taker is given some clear decisions to record. Good minutes rely on good chairing and a good agenda, as much as on good minute taking. It is very difficult to both chair a meeting and take minutes; the Chair should not take the minutes.

The Chair is also ultimately responsible for the minutes of the meeting and should always work with the minute taker in producing the final version of each set of minutes. It is good practice for the Chair to sign the approved version.

### **What should be in the Minutes**

Minutes are intended broadly as a record of who was at the meeting, what meeting it was, and what it decided. It is not usually necessary to record detailed discussion on every item, just an

indication of the issues, a statement of the decision or outcome, and clear actions with names of who will do what by when.

Although it is tempting, when time is short, to just photocopy the notes as they were taken at the meeting rather than write them up properly, notes like this are very unlikely to be of much use. You do not have to write up your minutes into very formal or official sounding language, normal everyday English is just as good. Remember that other people may at times need to see your minutes. Minutes should be factual and unemotional. Write clearly and if at all possible, type them, or most people will not read them.

Minutes will generally follow the same headings as the meeting's agenda, so getting the agenda right will be a good start. Use the following suggested headings to help:

**A set of Minutes should contain:**

**A heading:** giving the name of the group and the date the meeting took place. (Do not forget to include the year!)

**A list of who was present** at the meeting. Give their full names and include their position on the committee. If there is anyone at the meeting who is not a full member of the committee, they should be listed separately under a sub heading like 'Also in Attendance', and again they should be identified, for example as housing officers, local authority staff or from other organisations. It can be useful to identify which of the people present took the minutes.

**Apologies:** these are the names of people who have let the group know that they cannot attend this meeting. State their full names and roles.

**Minutes of the last meeting:** This item is where members get the chance to point out anything they feel is inaccurate in the last meeting's minutes. If no inaccuracies are pointed out then usually a phrase, "The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record" is used. If it is agreed that there are certain inaccuracies, then these are spelt out, with a replacement form of wording.

For example:

*It was agreed that 'The manager is not in post' should read 'The manager is now in post'.*

**Matters arising** from the Minutes of the Last Meeting. This is often confused with the item above but it is not the same. It is the place to update the discussion of any items which need it from the last meeting, but which are not mentioned as items on the agenda in their own right. If there are none, then, "There were no matters arising" would be an appropriate sentence here.

**Finance Report:** depending on the size of your group, this item may not be discussed in depth every time. However, it is an important item which should appear on the agenda of every meeting as a matter of course (known as a 'standing item') and should be reported on fully at least every three months.

**Report from the** Committee Meeting, Public Meeting, local liaison meeting {with date}: if your committee has sub committees or a working group which meets between committee meetings,

then their recommendations must be brought back to the full committee to be decided on, and any decisions recorded in the minutes.

**Any Other Business (AOB):** this is where members can raise issues that for some reason have not been included on the agenda and are not matters arising from the last meeting either. It is best to plan your meetings to avoid too many of these by careful agenda preparation, as too many items here mean the meeting is harder to plan and to chair, and could end up with important items being considered but without enough time for proper discussion. It is best to ask at the start of a meeting if there are any items of AOB so that any impact on the timing or agenda of the meeting can be taken into account at the start.

**Action column:** This usually goes down the right hand side of the page and says who is actually going to do what has been decided. You may want to make it clearer in the main minute, for example: *'Susan Smith agreed to write the letter and Peter Jones to type it'* and put Susan's and Peter's initials in the action column. An action check list attached to the minutes is another way of approaching this.

**Date, place and time of next meeting:** state this information at the end of the minutes.

### **What should Minutes look like?**

Again, there are no rules, as long as it is easy to make sense of the minutes. It is usual to give prominent headings to each item so that they stand out, and to number each item so that they are easier to refer to in the future. It may also be helpful to use standard wording to record decisions and to highlight the relevant word. For example:

#### *3. Opening Times*

*3.1 After a long discussion, it was agreed that the Centre would open five days a week from 5<sup>th</sup> January 2020*

*3.2. A decision on Sunday opening was deferred until the September meeting.*

### **Where should Minutes go when they are complete?**

They should be agreed and signed by the Chair of the meeting, a copy kept safely on file, and then copies distributed to relevant people. It is usual, but not essential, to include the minutes of the last meeting with the agenda for the next. Groups will need to make their own decision as to how soon after the meeting they will distribute minutes, but it is much easier to write them up while the meeting is fresh in your mind, and helpful for anyone in the action column to have a clear idea of what they have committed themselves to within a reasonable timescale. Ideally, completed minutes should be received at least two weeks prior to the next meeting.

It is usual to send a copy to everyone who attended the meeting or sent apologies. There may be other people, like your funders, who may require an occasional copy. Always check your minutes for any confidential items discussed before you share them outside of the committee, although it's unlikely that a small group will have confidential items, it can happen. It tends to be more relevant to more established groups who have paid employees, contracts, etc. but can sometimes happen when managing conflicts of interests on a committee. If there are confidential items to discuss, you can record these as a separate confidential minute so that they only go to those people who attended the meeting.

## 9. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

Annual General Meetings (AGMs) are held once a year, the first one being a year after the inaugural meeting. AGMs are where a group's committee reports back to the membership about what the group has been doing for the past 12 months. The Chair, Secretary and Treasurer should each give a report. The committee then stands down (resigns) and an independent person presides over the election of a new committee. Former committee members can be re-elected.

A lot of business needs to be dealt with at an AGM so it is not always necessary or practical to have a guest speaker, although some groups choose to do so.

Remember that when distributing leaflets to advertise the Annual General Meeting members must be given enough notice. Your constitution/rules/governing document will tell you how much notice you must give.

Below is the suggested format for holding an election at an AGM. You must consult your constitution/rules/governing document when preparing for your AGM.

### **The Presiding Officer:**

- Asks the current committee to stand down (resign)
- Asks for nominations for the role of the chair
- Asks for any nominations to be seconded (a second person to 'support' the nomination)
- Asks for any other nominations
- If there are no other nominations, asks for a show of hands as a vote for the nominee to be elected into position. As long as there is a majority vote, individual votes need not be counted
- If more than one nomination received, asks for a show of hands for each of the nominees and if the outcome is not obvious, votes will need to be counted
- States which nominee has been voted into post of chair
- Continues for each of the remaining officer and committee positions
- When voting in "ordinary" committee members this is done by a majority show of hands
- Asks the new committee to join the top table

### **Variations**

#### **Committee Election of Officers**

An alternative is to elect (or re-elect) the committee at the AGM and at the next committee meeting decide which individuals are best suited to carry out which roles on the committee.

#### **Nomination Forms**

Groups may decide to have nomination forms for people to fill in prior to the public meeting. These don't count as votes but are a useful way of recording who has been nominated and seconded. However it is still the people who are present at the meeting who must vote the committee into position.

## Help and advice

If you need any further assistance or clarification you can contact Macc or your Neighbourhood Officer.

## 10. RISK, INSURANCE AND LIABILITY

This section of the guide contains important information that every member of your group needs to be aware of. Committee members in particular need to be aware of liabilities and potential risks.

### RISK

Every group or activity is open to a number of risks, in particular:

- **Health and Safety**
- **Financial**
- **Reputation**
- **Safeguarding**

How to reduce and avoid the risks:

Before undertaking any activities you should always do a risk assessment. If you are unsure about this please seek advice.

Manage the finances of the group with care and ensure regular reports to the whole committee.

A positive reputation for your group will help it to grow and develop, attract and retain members and help you access funding and support. A negative reputation is likely to affect all these and ultimately may cause your group to close.

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults will be a consideration for your group if you are running activities. If you are unsure about this please seek advice. Keeping your volunteers and participants safe is very important.

### INSURANCE

You are strongly advised to arrange Public Liability Insurance for your group – especially if the group intends to offer any service, support or activity to the general public.

### LIABILITY

This section of the guide relates to individual liability. The suggested group structure using the Constitution in Appendix 1 (which can be amended to suit your circumstances) is for an **Unincorporated Association**. This means that the group is not a 'corporate body', it is not a legal entity in its own right. 'Unincorporated' means that legally it is a collection of individuals, which is the committee. In the worst case scenario, if something were to go wrong, then individual committee members could be sued. Not every group needs to incorporate; it depends on the level of risk involved.

The group structure suggested in this guide is not the only structure a group can use. An unincorporated group structure as described in this guide is the simplest and easiest to establish



but it may not suit your purposes. If you intend to have premises or staff or manage larger sums of funding you are advised to look at other options 'to incorporate' as either a charity or a company.

For more information and help see:

- [NIVCA: Legal Structures for Voluntary and Community Groups](#)
- Macc's [Factsheet 9: Choosing a Legal Structure](#)

## 11. ACCESS AND INCLUSION

Your Group should be accessible and inclusive for all members of the local community. You should consider the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010.

**The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society.**



**It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in some situations. It sets out the different ways in which it's unlawful to treat someone.**

It is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of:

- Age
- Gender reassignment
- Being married or in a civil partnership
- Being pregnant or on maternity leave
- Disability
- Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

These are called 'protected characteristics'.

You're protected from discrimination:

- At work
- In education
- As a consumer
- When using public services
- When buying or renting property
- As a member or guest of a private club or group

When your group organises a meeting, event or activity it will need to consider the access and inclusion of everyone and must take all reasonable steps to make adjustments, this may be through interpreted information, larger print leaflets, using appropriate imagery etc.

## APPENDIX 1 – EXAMPLE CONSTITUTION (non-charitable unincorporated association)

**Highlighted sections need to be tailored to your group:**

**NAME OF GROUP:** xxxx

**BOUNDARIES OF THE AREA COVERED BY THE GROUP:** xxxxx

### AIMS

1. To work on behalf of all users and neighbours of the area of xxxxx to bring about improvements in the community
2. To further good relations with the City Council and other service providers and agencies in the area
3. To provide residents with information and to encourage a community spirit in the area

### MEMBERSHIP

1. Membership is open to any member of the public who supports the aims of the group, irrespective of political belief, nationality, religion, race, colour, sexuality, age or ability – (known as ordinary members). Residents of the area surrounding the [define area, e.g. park, streets, neighbourhood, ward] will be encouraged to join the group.

### CONDUCT

1. Committee members shall endeavour to carry out their duties in a positive and constructive way.
2. Any committee member behaving in an unreasonable manner or in a manner likely to bring the group into disrepute may be expelled from the committee by a majority vote of the committee.
3. Committee members should conduct themselves in accordance with the principles of THE GROUP's Equal Opportunities policy.

### THE COMMITTEE

1. The committee shall have a minimum of SIX<sup>3</sup> elected members and will manage the work of the group.
2. The committee shall have an identified Chair, Treasurer and Secretary (officers) and at least THREE other members.
3. New members can be elected if vacancies arise.
4. Any committee members selected to stand as a candidate in local government elections must resign from the committee, but may be invited to attend meetings in a non-voting capacity.
5. Councillors cannot be committee members of the group, but may be invited to committee meetings, in a non-voting capacity.

### COMMITTEE MEETINGS

1. The committee members shall meet at least 4 times per year and as often as the group's business requires.
2. Each member shall have one vote (in the event of a tie the Chair shall have a second vote).

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<sup>3</sup> HIGHLIGHTED SECTIONS ARE SUGGESTED MINIMUM NUMBERS

3. The minimum number of people for a committee meeting to be valid (a quorum) shall be **FOUR** committee members.
4. All committee decisions will be recorded in writing at meetings.

#### PUBLIC MEETINGS

1. Public meetings shall be held at **least TWO** times per year (the Annual General Meeting can be counted as one of those).
2. The quorum for general meetings shall be a minimum of **[30%]** of ordinary members. If fewer attend, a new meeting must be called.
3. An Extraordinary Meeting may be called at any time, at the request of the Committee or **EIGHT** of the general membership.

#### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

1. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) shall be held yearly, starting 12 months from the date of the launch of the Group. A maximum of 8 weeks extension is allowed as required.
2. The AGM shall be held to report the Group's activities, publish independently accessed accounts (as required) and elect new committee members and officers.
3. Notice of the AGM must be given **TWO WEEKS** before the meeting.
4. The AGM can change the constitution by a **TWO-THIRDS** majority vote of those present.
5. Any suggested changes to the Constitution must be handed to the Secretary **14 days** before the AGM.

#### FINANCE

1. The committee shall have a bank account in the name of the Group.
2. All payments must be signed by **TWO** out of a possible **THREE** signatories.
3. All spending shall be approved by the Committee, and shall be used to achieve the aims of the group.
4. The Treasurer must keep account of the finances and produce **quarterly** financial reports to the Committee.
5. The Group accounts shall be independently assessed yearly, and presented to the Annual General Meeting.
6. Married, common law partners, or members of the same family cannot be co-signatories.

#### PUBLICITY/INFORMATION

1. The committee will keep its members informed of activities via newsletters, leaflets, public meetings, etc.
2. No publicity can be distributed in the Group name without committee approval.

#### DISSOLUTION

1. The Group may only be dissolved at a Special General Meeting called for that purpose and advertised **14 days** before the meeting.
2. The proposal to dissolve the Group shall take effect only if agreed by **two thirds** of the members present at the meeting.
3. In the event of the Group being dissolved, all assets and monies may be donated to a similar organisation. Any unspent grant monies should first be discussed with the Funder who issued the grant.

4. Money and assets provided as a result of fundraising by the Group shall be used for the specific purpose identified at the time that the funds were raised or shall be donated to an organisation with similar aims in accordance with the wishes of members canvassed at a Special General Meeting.

**APPROVAL**

This constitution was approved by Members of the Group on: \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATORIES**

CHAIR: \_\_\_\_\_

SECRETARY: \_\_\_\_\_

TREASURER: \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX B – EXAMPLE MINUTES**

***Organisation name***

***Meeting Minutes***

*Date of meeting:*

*Location:*

*Present:*                    *List of attendees*

*Guests:*                    *List of guest speakers, council officers etc.*

*Apologies:*                *Anyone who said they could not attend*

### **1. Minutes of previous meeting**

*Agree the contents of the minutes of the previous meeting.*

### **2. Matters Arising**

*Is there anything that needs following up from the previous meeting*

### **3. Agenda Items**

*List all announcements made at the meeting. For example, new members, change of event etc.*

*Summarise the discussion for each issue, state the outcome and assign any action items.*

### **4. AOB**

*Any other business that was not on the agenda*

### **5. Next Meeting**

*Next meeting:*            *Date, time, Location*

## APPENDIX C – FURTHER HELP AND ADVICE

WHO	WHAT	PHONE	EMAIL / WEBSITE
Macc	Manchester Community Central portal and supporting community groups with advice and training	0333 321 3021	<a href="#">Welcome to Manchester Community Central</a> <a href="#">  Manchester Community Central</a>
<b>Neighbourhood Team</b> If you need any further assistance or clarification you can contact your council Neighbourhood Officer or Councillor	North Manchester	<a href="#">North Manchester Together</a>   <a href="#">Manchester Community Central</a>	<b>To find your councillor search:</b> <a href="#">Find Councillor (manchester.gov.uk)</a> <b>Or look for general information:</b> <a href="#">Volunteering opportunities and organisations</a> <a href="#">  Manchester City Council</a>
	Central Manchester	Manchester City Council switchboard 0161 234 5000	
	South Manchester	Manchester City Council switchboard 0161 234 5000	
Local community centre	General advice, location for meetings	Contact your local centre	<b>Search the directory of groups:</b> <a href="#">Search   Manchester Community Central</a>
Charity Commission	Advice and information to set up a registered charity	0300 066 9197	<a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission">www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission</a>
Health and Safety Executive	Advice on general health and safety and risk assessments	0300 003 1747	<a href="#">HSE: Information about health and safety at work</a>