

## Health and Safety— legal requirements for small groups

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Ensuring the health and safety of everyone involved in a group, whether large or small is an important issue for all groups. The legal requirements in relation to health and safety can be confusing especially for small groups who do not employ staff. Such groups may well be thinking what requirements apply to us, do I need to have a written policy, if so, how do I write one and how do we implement it?

This fact sheet is specially aimed at small community groups who do not employ staff and rely on the good will of volunteers. The guide gives information about the legal requirements in relation to health and safety, how to work towards ensuring the safety of volunteers and members, how to write a health and safety policy and carry out risk assessments.

### **Health and Safety—the law!**

Most health and safety legislation applies only to groups that employ staff, however, groups who are run solely by volunteers must also ensure the health, safety and welfare of its members, service users and volunteers in its activities and/or events. All groups have a legal duty to avoid carelessly causing injury to person/s through the activities it provides. Duty of care applies to any group regardless of its size, income or whether the group has paid staff. Both individuals and groups can be held responsible in law for accidents.

Things your group should consider:

- Carry out risk assessments which will help your group identify possible risks to the general public and volunteers.
- If volunteers are expected to lift people, work with people with challenging behaviours or prepare food, provide the necessary training.

- Make sure everyone is aware of the fire precautions, procedures and exits in the place where activities are undertaken.
- Make sure your group has access to a first aid box and that accidents are recorded in a book.
- Make sure you have a qualified first aider.
- Is electrical and other equipment you use checked regularly?
- If you and other volunteers are working with vulnerable people e.g. children and young people, older people have CRB checks been conducted?
- Are chemical substances e.g. kitchen cleaning substances kept in a safe place and out of reach of children?
- Does your group have insurances to protect you against accident claims e.g. public liability insurance?
- Are members or service users encouraged to give feedback on anything they feel is a health and safety risk?

### **Health and Safety Policy**

Voluntary organisations that employ more than 5 members of staff are required by law to have a written health and safety policy, however, it is good practice for any small group to also have such a written policy.

A health and safety policy is a written document that should have the following:

- A general statement of intent to ensure and maintain the health and safety of staff, members, volunteers and the general public.
- A description of the organisation and arrangements for carrying out the policy. This should include the names of people responsible for carrying out the policy and the health and safety procedures.

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- Be signed and dated by an appropriate person e.g. the Chair or Health and Safety Officer.
- A safety policy must be reviewed regularly to ensure that it remains effective.
- The policy must be communicated to all members of staff and volunteers.

Information for this fact sheet has been gathered from Volunteering England, Bournemouth Online and 'The Good Employment Guide for the Voluntary Sector' by Wendy Ranken.

### **Risk assessments**

Risk assessments simply means identifying the possible risks to staff, volunteers, members and service users to any activities or event that is being or will be delivered. Once the risks have been identified it is important to identify how these risks will be overcome and who will do it. You can design your own risk assessment form or use the sample form developed by Dudley CVS for small groups. It is important to carry out risk assessments regularly and for any new activity provided.

### **Support available from Dudley CVS.**

If you need any help in relation to health and safety issues, support is available from Dudley CVS telephone on 01384 78166 or visit:  
[www.dudleycvs.org.uk](http://www.dudleycvs.org.uk)

### **Useful contacts**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE)  
([www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)) Telephone: 08701545500.

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)  
([www.rosipa.com](http://www.rosipa.com)) Telephone: 01212482000.

The Fire Protection Association (FPA)  
([www.thefpa.co.uk](http://www.thefpa.co.uk)) Telephone: 01608812500.

Volunteering England  
([www.volunteering.org.uk](http://www.volunteering.org.uk)) Telephone: