

Guidance on setting-up a new voluntary group during the coronavirus pandemic

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yorkcvs

Introduction:

York CVS is a social action organisation; supporting and championing York's voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector to make positive change, challenge issues and grow new ideas for the future in order to strengthen communities.

We do this by supporting new and existing VCSE groups and organisations with guidance about legal structures, governance issues, policies and procedures and by identifying potential funding sources and developing funding bids. We also bring organisations together to discuss and challenge local issues through our events and voluntary sector forums.

We are providing the following guidance to individuals who are thinking about setting-up a voluntary organisation during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

1. Guidance on getting started:

Before you start, ask yourself: is there any other group doing this work which you could help? This might be better than starting up a new group.

If you decide to set-up a group, we suggest that you do these following things:

- Form a committee: this could be just 3 or 4 people, who can be the decision makers. The other people involved will be members of the group. You can extend the committee if you wish, but keep it to a manageable size.
- Keep a record of the committee's decisions. At some time in the future, you might need to look back at how decisions were taken, who took them, when, and why.
- Allocate roles to people, starting with committee members: for example, managing social media, keeping records, preparing guidance for volunteers, managing the group's money (if any).
- Ideally, have a simple constitution which describes the purpose of the group, how volunteers will join, how and when you will report on your work, etc.

- Open a bank account if you need one.
- Think about getting public liability insurance.
- You will need some agreed ways of working – that is, guidance to volunteers which describes both *what* they will do and *how* they should do it. Some activities will need extra levels of control – for example:
 - Dog walkers need insurance cover
 - Collecting prescriptions and taking them to people’s homes should be done by volunteers who have an up to date certificate from the Disclosure and Barring Service (commonly known as a DBS check)
 - Handling and accounting for money - as a general rule, volunteers shouldn’t handle other people’s money. If you authorise *anyone* to handle money, make sure you have really strict rules in place first.

2. Policies and procedures:

You should prepare simple policies covering the riskiest aspects of your work. We recommend starting with these:

- Health and safety, including (among other things) guidance on social distancing, the safe handling of food and other things delivered to people in their homes, etc.
- Safeguarding children and young people.
- Safeguarding vulnerable adults.
- Privacy and data protection, including how you will make sure personal data is kept confidential. Personal data includes the names, addresses and other personal details of all volunteers and all the people they are helping. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) lays down strict rules about this.
- Equality and diversity: you must make sure you avoid any form of discrimination. You must also make sure no-one is subject to any form of harassment. Again, this applies to anyone connected with your group, including volunteers and the people you help.

- Make sure volunteers know about your policies and ways of working. As a minimum, you should send policies and agreed ways of working to individual volunteers by hand, by post or email, and they should confirm that they've read them. You might also consider training sessions, which could be done online or by phone/video call.
- Consider how you will collect, share and learn from volunteers' experience. It's the best way to check that you're doing all the right things, in the best possible way. It's also important as a way of checking that you're following your policies on safeguarding and data protection.
- Linked with this, consider how you'll get feedback from the people you're helping. You need to know what's working well and whether there are gaps that you could fill. There should also be a way for people to raise concerns with you – and to pass on compliments!
- Consider what to do if a volunteer *doesn't* follow your policies or agreed ways of working. The first step might be no more than a reminder, but you should also be ready to suspend or remove volunteers from the group if they do the wrong things.

3. Guidance and Support

York CVS can provide further information on some of these points. For example, we can provide a model constitution and lists of banks and insurance providers, as well as links to other sources of ideas and advice.

Our email address is enquiries@yorkcvs.org.uk

Visit our website at: www.yorkcvs.org.uk