

What do you need to have in place before opening the doors?

So you have done your research, consulted with young people and found a suitable venue - see the Setting Up section for the basics around deciding what you want to do, who for and the reasons for doing this.

What is next? Before opening the doors for the youth project, there are some basics that need to be in place to protect you, the staff and most importantly the young people. It is not advised to do anything without having the following in place:

- Governance Structure (including young people governance)
- Financial Basics
- Insurance
- Policies and Procedures



Governance Structure - who is responsible?



Summary

At this stage, most groups do not register as a charity, you are more likely to be what is known as an 'Unincorporated Association'. This basically means you are not registered either with Companies House or the Charity Commission. To remain an unincorporated group your income must not exceed £5000 per annum. This structure means you will be governed by a Constitution put in place by a Management Committee.

The management committee have the legal responsibility for the project as a group of individuals rather than as an organisation and they are the prime decision making body of the project. It is important to note that should the group incur debts it can't pay, or if there is a claim made against the project, then the management committee is personally liable. In addition, any hiring agreements must be made under an individual's name e.g. hiring a room at a community centre.

Alternatively, your group may decide to be a legal entity as an organisation as a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) or a charitable company (limited by guarantee), alternatively you may look at becoming a Community Interest Company (CIC). These do mean, in most cases, limited liability for the governing body however it also means a requirement to comply with criteria set by Companies House, the Charity Commission or both.

It is not a recommended option to forego a management committee because without a governing body it will not be clear who has ultimate responsibility and this may fall to you personally. Also, having a team of people making decisions together will take the pressure off and other people can bring expertise and knowledge that you might not have.

It is good practice to have young people involved in the governance - they will often have opinions about how the group is run and how to improve it. You could start by having one or two keen young people come along to committee meetings and go from there. Some youth groups have set up 'Young Committees' where young people are elected by the group and have their own meetings where they discuss issues and make recommendations to the main committee.

Principles

- A Committee should have at least 3 people, for the three main roles of Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer.
- One person should also take responsibility for Safeguarding.
- The governance document - the Constitution - should be a working document that includes the aims, values, principles and powers of the group. It should also include how the committee will work, how decisions will be made and responsibilities of the various positions.
- Young people should be involved in the governance.

Things to do/consider

- What type of structure you want and are you clear about what each structure means for you and the group?
- What are the overarching rules that will guide decision making and responsibilities?
- How will young people get involved in a meaningful way?

Useful links



- The central government information site has some clear guidance on how to choose a structure - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charity-types-how-to-choose-a-structure>
- Sandy Adirondack has a website covering how to run a Voluntary Sector organisation. It is a site highly recommended by Bradford CVS <http://www.sandy-a.co.uk/legalstatus.htm>
- <http://www.governancepages.org.uk>

Resources

- “What Management Committees Need to Know: A Guide to the National Occupational Standards for Management Committee Members of Small Voluntary Organisations and Community Groups” - A free resource copyrighted by the Governance Hub and Bradford CVS. This was produced in 2007 and so is a little out of date; however it does detail the advantages and disadvantages of some legal structures (it does not look at Community Interest Companies for instance). The best way to find it is google.
- “Voluntary But Not Amateur: A Guide to the Law for Voluntary Organisations and Community Groups” by R. Hayes and J. Reason - written in 2009 but still useful. This is a book you will have to pay for.
- Code of Governance.
- Training by Momentum.


Policies and Procedures - doing things the right way



Summary

Any person in a good group/club will know how to act and react in most situations because you will have a set of policies and procedures in place (we can never 100% guarantee for all situations because life is unpredictable - that is called managing risk). Policies and procedures set out a consistent way of doing things for your group so that all volunteers are confident in knowing how your club wants to work with young people - your ethos and values; and what that actually looks like - what action to take and when.

Useful links

The NCVO KnowHowNonProfit  have a policies and procedures page on their website with a checklist and links to some draft 'starter for 10' policies -
https://knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/operations/legal/copy_of_policies

Resources

If you are not sure, contact Momentum, they can talk through the most relevant and needed policies to get you started
info@momentumnorfolk.org.uk

Templates for some essential policies and procedures can be found on the resource page of Momentum's website -
<http://www.momentumnorfolk.org.uk/our-services/resources/>

Principles

- Length does not equal a good policy. A good policy is clear, easy to understand and covers the relevant aspects.
- This also applies to the accompanying procedure - clear and understandable. A good procedure is not ambiguous, people should know what step to take and when.
- Don't copy other organisations - use them as a template to start but they have to be your own otherwise it will not work for you.
- Policies and procedures are working documents - they need to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis e.g. annually.
- All volunteers should have read the policies and procedures before starting with the group and everyone including the young people should know how to access and read the policies and procedures.
- Once the group is up and running, get feedback from the young people and ensure you include them in the reviews.
- Don't start with too many policies and procedures - start with the essentials.
- The policies and procedures should link with the risk assessments - see the section Keeping Safe.

Things to do/consider

- Who is the policy and procedure aimed at - will they be able to understand it?
- Think about how you can get young people to review them as soon as possible but in a fun way - let's face it policies and procedures can seem dull to quite a lot of people.
- Think about how you want to do things as an organisation for example will you use a red/yellow card system or something else to manage behaviour?

Insurance - protecting the club, you and the young people



Summary

Insurance is an absolute essential as it limits some of the risks your group will face. Running a youth group can be difficult and risky so it is important that you find the right insurance for what you are doing. Insurance does not stop things from happening but providing you have followed policies, procedures and risk assessments then insurance can provide some peace of mind should a claim need to be made or you need support with a claim being made against your group.

Principles

- Insurance is essential - it is not an optional extra and it is not as expensive as you might think.
- Get the right cover for the activities your club does.
- Talk to a number of insurance companies to make sure they understand what it is you will be doing - look out for the ones who understand some of the risks involved in working with young people.
- Do not start the group until you have the insurance in place.

Useful links



- There is a sponsored article on CYPNow website – <http://www.cypnow.co.uk/cyp/sponsored-feature/1147138/what-insurance-do-youth-groups-and-children's-charities-need> which covers the basics, don't forget this is written by an insurance company so you may not need all that they are suggesting.
- There is a lengthier piece on the Premier Public Liability website – <http://www.premierpublicliabilityinsurance.co.uk/clubs-societies> which has lots of useful questions and scenarios to help you decide. Again don't forget that this is written by one insurance company.

Things to do/consider

- Think about how many people will be accessing the club, what activities you will be doing?
- Be clear about the insurance you will operate under at the venue you hire, what does it cover and not cover?
- What about your equipment, money and volunteers - what cover do you need for this?
- If you go off-site with your group, will you have the right insurance in place?
- Think about preparing a list of questions prior to phoning insurance companies so you can make sure everything is discussed before you then make a decision.

Financial basics - keeping money safe.



Summary

You will need to have money to run the club as hall hire, DBS checks (see Keeping Safe section), equipment etc all cost money. It is more than likely you will be collecting 'subs' from the young people to attend and that you may be eligible for some grants. Before any grants can be awarded it is important to have the right processes and systems in place to ensure money is accounted for and kept safe.

"Youth clubs need to make sure they don't run out of money and that the money is going towards the youth club, not spent on other things."

Alivia, 15

Principles

- Assign a person to act as Treasurer from the Committee, having one person monitoring the finances will make it easier.
- You will need to set up a bank account.
- There should be two signatories on cheques required from the management committee.
- Set up a basic spreadsheet to monitor money - record what comes in and what goes out (much like you may do for household expenses).
- Always check that the bank balance agrees with your spreadsheet at the end of each month.
- Have a system for handling cash and petty cash, making sure money gets handled and signed out in the correct ways.

Things to do/consider

- When looking for a bank account don't just think about deals, think about ease of access - you will be dealing with cash a lot. Also, let the bank know you are setting up an account for a voluntary youth group; they will be able to direct you to the appropriate ones.
- Although the Treasurer will have the main responsibility for checking finances, how will you monitor that this is correct? Consider at least two people understanding the systems and how to do this. This covers holidays, allows smooth handovers and provides an audit check.
- When recording on the spreadsheet, don't just think about how much, write what the money was used for or where it came from e.g. used to buy a football, came from young person subs. Knowing where most of your money comes from and what you're spending it on can help with future planning including making applications for grants, and also help you spot if you're spending too much in one area.

Useful links

All major banks offer free banking for small youth groups - they often aim the accounts at 'clubs and societies' and many of them call this type of account things like a 'Treasurer's account' - google 'banking for community groups'.

