# Strong Foundations Programme

**Thank you for signing up to the Strong Foundations Programme. This document will help you to identify the strengths and weaknesses of your organisation, and understand what evidence you will need to collect in order to gain a 'Strong Foundations' certificate.**

The purpose of the Strong Foundations programme is to strengthen your organisation's policies, procedures and practice so you can go on to run high quality, sustainable activities for your group members. It's not designed to be a 'tick box' exercise where you simply list what policies you already have; each section of the programme contains questions aimed to spark ideas about how you can grow and improve what you do. Give some thought to each question and discuss them with the rest of your team – they might have some good ideas about changes you might need to make and what documents you could use as evidence.

You'll notice that some evidence is listed as "suggested" and others as "required". As the name suggests, "required evidence" is evidence you must submit in order to get your certificate. "Suggested evidence" gives you an idea of what the assessment panel will be looking for, but gives you some scope to be creative. The panel will expect to see at least one piece of evidence for each question, but there is no maximum. However, quality is better than quantity, and it's important to think about how well each piece of evidence answers the question.

When you've collected your evidence, contact us to begin the next stage of the process. This will involve a group visit from a member of the Voluntary Norfolk Communities team, who will chat with staff and group members and talk through the evidence you've collected. (If you work with children and young people, your visit will be carried out by someone from the Momentum service who can give you specific advice about working with under 18s.) They will write a summary of the visit which will go to the assessment panel along with your evidence.

You can submit your evidence electronically (e.g. via OneDrive or Dropbox, or on a memory stick) or in a physical folder. Please make sure the evidence is in order and that each item is labelled so it's clear what question it refers to (e.g. 1a, 4b etc.)

If you're struggling with evidence for a particular question, it might mean your organisation needs to do some more work on that area; for instance investing in staff training or bring in a new way of working. Please do contact the Voluntary Norfolk Communities team if you need support – you can find our phone number and email addresses on the Voluntary Norfolk website.

Finally, we know that the voluntary sector is very diverse, so there might be sections of the programme that don't apply to your organisation (for instance, if you provide support online or over the phone, your fire risk assessment will be different to a group running in-person sessions). If that's the case, please get in touch with us to discuss, as we may waive the requirement for you or ask you to submit alternative evidence.

There are eight sections in the programme:
(click on the links below to be taken directly to that section)



There is also a **Resources** section at the end of this document with some suggested websites for further information on these topics.

# 1. Engagement and Participation

This section is about how you promote your organisation and engage new members. We're not expecting you to be marketing geniuses or to have an expensive, flashy website – the way you engage with potential new members will depend on who your group is aimed at and the best way to reach them.

This section also looks at how you get feedback from current members on things your organisation does, so you can shape your projects to better suit the needs of the people you are working with. Getting feedback isn't about cherry-picking responses that will look good to your funders, it's about creating space for ongoing, honest discussions so that you can get a good sense of what's working well and where you might want to make changes.

| 1a. How do new members find out about your organisation? | |
|---|---|
| It's important that potential new members can easily find about your organisation and what you can offer them.<br><br>Your promotional material should include information such as dates, times, location, activities and contact details for the organisation, and be clear about who it is targeting (for example a specific age range, or residents from a particular area).<br><br>Make sure to include contact details for your group so potential members can get in touch with any questions they might have. | *Suggested evidence:*<br>• screenshot of your website / social media page<br>• leaflets or posters about your organisation or about a specific event or project<br>• information about your group in a parish magazine or local newsletter<br>• leaflets aimed at potential referrers, e.g. schools or other organisations |

| 1b. How do you collect feedback from group members? | |
|---|---|
| Your organisation should gather regular feedback from group members so you can understand what's working well and where improvements can be made.<br><br>There are lots of different ways to gather feedback: you could use pre-written feedback forms with questions on, hand out postcards for group members to write their comments on, or put some pieces of flipchart on the wall and ask people to write down their highlights and lowlights from the project.<br>If your group members don't like writing or sitting still, you could try a 'vote with your feet' exercise where each part of the room represents a different answer (e.g. 'yes, 'no' or 'maybe') and they have to move around. You could submit photos of this (with the group members' consent) as part of your evidence. | *Suggested evidence:*<br>• completed feedback form (please remove any identifying information e.g. names)<br>• flipchart from 'graffiti wall' exercise<br>• photos of a group feedback session |

| 1c. How do current members feel about the organisation? | |
|---|---|
| This section is about giving group members a chance to have their say and for you to gather their thoughts on how the organisation can improve.<br><br>The conversation could take the form of a 'steering group' discussion with a small group of members and leaders, or it could be more informal. You could record the conversation as written notes or you could get creative and make a video! There are some questions in the Resources section to help you steer the discussion. This conversation should give you more detail than a few lines on a feedback form, and it should be a two-way discussion where group leaders can comment back and members can respond further. It's important to emphasise that you want them to be truthful, even if that means pointing out things they don't like – this is necessary if you want to make your organisation better.<br><br>Try to get diverse perspectives, for instance testimonies from someone who has been coming for a long time and someone who is fairly new; or an older member and a younger one. | *Suggested evidence:*<br>• notes from a steering group or members' committee<br>• a video or audio recording of a discussion with group members<br>• screenshot of a WhatsApp conversation with group members |

| 1d. *(for groups working with under 18s)* How do you set ground rules for members? | |
|---|---|
| Groups working with children and young people should have a group agreement or similar document which sets out how group members are expected to behave while at the club. This might be part of a bigger induction pack for new members, explaining what happens at the club.<br><br>This should be a collaborative process, where young people can have their say about the agreement, not a 'top-down' decision. If you want to see some examples, you can find group agreements from other youth clubs online. | *Required evidence:*<br>• code of conduct / group agreement for group members<br><br>*Suggested evidence:*<br>• new member induction pack |

## 2. Safeguarding

Whether you work with under 5s, over 50s, or any age group in between, you have a duty to keep your group members safe from all types of abuse. You need to ensure that your group is a safe place where people will be protected – this means vetting your staff and volunteers carefully to ensure they are working with you for the right reasons and having clear procedures for recording and reporting concerns about group members or other volunteers / members of staff.

You also have a duty to record and share disclosures from group members (for example if they tell someone in your organisation that they are being abused at home) and to spot the signs that someone might be experiencing abuse so that you can act on this and get them the help they need.

There are different laws about safeguarding children (under 18s) and adults.
Organisations who only work with over 18s should have a child safeguarding policy if the adults you work with are likely to have children (or grandchildren), whether they live with them or not. Your organisation has a responsibility to help keep these children safe and report any concerns, even if you have never met them. Similarly, organisations who only work with children should have an adult safeguarding policy setting out how to respond to concerns about adult members of the family who might have care and support needs.

| 2a. Do you have robust, up-to-date safeguarding policies in place? | |
|---|---|
| Your policies should explain your organisation's commitment to protecting children and adults at risk, and what steps you will take to keep them safe and respond to any concerns.<br><br>The policies should include a statement explaining what safeguarding children and adults at risk means, as well as a section outlining what types of abuse there are and what to look out for.<br>It should also contain the name and contact details of the Named Person(s) / Designated Safeguarding Officer(s) for your organisation.<br>Like all your policies, they should be signed by your chair of trustees or equivalent, and should contain the date of when the policy was agreed and a future date for it to be reviewed and updated.<br><br>The Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board (NSAB) and the Safer Programme run by Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP) can provide policy templates to show you what a good safeguarding policy should contain. There are links to their websites in the Resources section. | *Required evidence:*<br>• safeguarding children policy<br>• safeguarding adults policy<br><br>*Suggested evidence:*<br>• Safer Programme certificate, showing that your policies have been checked and approved by the Safer team |

| 2b. How do you manage safeguarding concerns, disclosures and allegations? | |
|---|---|
| Your organisation should have written procedures to put your safeguarding policy into action. These might be separate documents, or they might be appendices to your safeguarding policy.<br><br>The procedures should set out clearly how your organisation responds to child protection and / or adult safeguarding issues, including concerns about or a disclosure from a child or vulnerable adult.<br><br>Each procedure should be dated and have a review date, so staff / volunteers can ensure they are following the most up-to-date procedures.<br><br>In the Resources section, you can find more information about writing safeguarding procedures and links to organisations who can offer advice. | *Required evidence:*<br>• a flowchart or other document telling staff / volunteers how to report concerns<br>• a blank concerns form used to record concerns or disclosures<br>• a written procedure for managing allegations made against staff / volunteers |

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">2c. How do you ensure your staff / volunteers know how to identify and record concerns?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Policies and procedures are important, but they’re no use if your staff / volunteers don’t know about them or have never read them!<br><br>You should also ensure that all your staff and volunteers have regular safeguarding training so they are up to date with any changes to the relevant legislation and to refresh their knowledge. Your safeguarding lead(s) / designated officer(s) should also have specific training for that role.<br><br>It’s good practice to keep a record of training dates so you know when your staff / volunteers are due for refresher training.<br><br>Your staff / volunteers should also keep up to date with emerging issues that might affect your group members, such as grooming, ‘cuckooing’ or radicalisation. Depending on your resources and the size of your organisation, this could be done by engaging in formal training courses, or your safeguarding lead might find out about an issue (by reading official guidance from organisations such as the police or the Home Office) and explain it at a team meeting.<br>The Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board and the Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership both provide updates on key safeguarding issues via their websites.</td>
<td>Required evidence:<ul><li>safeguarding / child protection training certificates (dated within the last 3 years)</li><li>designated safeguarding officer training certificates</li><li>staff / volunteer induction pack (or similar) with explanation of safeguarding procedures and where to find safeguarding policies</li></ul>Suggested evidence:<ul><li>training certificates for specific safeguarding issues, e.g. suicide prevention, trauma-informed practice, child exploitation, child sexual abuse</li><li>team meeting notes showing that safeguarding issues have been discussed (ensure any group members’ names / identifying information are removed)</li><li>signed statement from a staff member / volunteer stating that they have read and understood your organisation’s safeguarding policies and procedures</li></ul></td></tr>
</table>

| 2d. How do you ensure new staff / volunteers are suitable to work with your group members? | |
|---|---|
| It's important to ensure that new staff / volunteers have the right motivations for wanting to work with children or vulnerable adults. Ensuring you have the right staff / volunteer team is a key part of creating a safe, welcoming atmosphere in your organisation.<br><br>DBS checks should be part of your safer recruitment process, but they only tell you if someone has previous convictions or is barred from working with children or vulnerable adults. You should have other processes in place to vet new staff / volunteers and this should be proportionate to the size of your organisation. For instance, if you are a small community group run by volunteers, you could vet potential new volunteers by organising an informal interview conducted by two existing team members. | *Required evidence:*<br>• dates of DBS checks for all relevant staff / volunteers (dated within last 3 years) or evidence that your staff / volunteers have signed up for the update service<br>• safer recruitment policy statement, describing your process for vetting new volunteers<br><br>*Suggested evidence:*<br>• evidence that you take up references for new staff members (e.g. a job advertisement which states this)<br>• interview questions showing that you ask candidates about their motivations |

| 2e. How do you let group members and other stakeholders (e.g. parents) know about your safeguarding policies and procedures, particularly how to raise a concern? | |
|---|---|
| Your safeguarding policies are public documents and should be made available to group members, parents and partner organisations (for instance anyone who visits the group) so they all understand what to do if they are worried about a child or vulnerable adult. Remember, safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.<br><br>You might also want to promote specific safeguarding campaigns that are relevant to your group members and might prompt them to open up about their experiences (for example about domestic abuse or cyberbullying). Having posters on the wall about specific issues spreads the message to group members that it is okay to talk about those things. | *Suggested evidence:*<br>• screenshot of your safeguarding policy on your website<br>• new member induction pack which includes safeguarding information<br>• safeguarding information posters on display (these could be homemade or from a national campaign, e.g. Childline or Thinkuknow) |

# 3. Valuing People

As well as keeping them safe, you should strive to make your group members, staff and volunteers feel valued by your organisation. This will help with staff and volunteer retention and encourage supportive, trusting relationships to develop between them and group members. A warm, welcoming atmosphere can be cultivated by resolving disputes quickly and effectively, and ensuring that your staff and volunteers treat everyone with respect.

Some of your members might have specific needs, for instance a disability or medical condition, which you should be aware of so that you can support them to engage fully in activities. This is particularly important if you are offering food as part of your service, as you will need to know if any of your group members have allergies.

Your organisation also has a legal requirement under the Equalities Act 2010 not to discriminate against anyone, and you should be aware of the ten 'protected characteristics' which the Act covers (such as race, age and sexual orientation). You can find out more about this in the Resources section.

| 3a. Is your equality and diversity policy up-to-date and robust? | |
|---|---|
| Your equality and diversity policy should set out your commitment to ensuring your organisation treats everyone equally and doesn't discriminate. It should make reference to the Equality Act 2010 and the nine 'protected characteristics' (you can find out more about this by following the links in the Resources section).<br><br>Like all your policies, it should be signed by your chair of trustees or equivalent, and should contain the date of when it was agreed and a future date for it to be reviewed and updated.<br><br>In the Resources section of this document, you can find more information about writing policies, as well as links to template policies. | *Required evidence:*<br>• equality and diversity policy<br><br>*Suggested evidence:*<br>• equality and diversity training certificates<br>• equal opportunities policy for recruitment |

| 3b. How do you resolve conflict and deal with bullying within your group? | |
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| Conflict will emerge in almost any group, so it's important to know how to resolve disputes and mediate between people with dissenting views. This should include disagreements between staff / volunteers, or between a staff member and a group member, as well as between group members.<br><br>Unchallenged incidents of bullying can create a toxic environment in your group and cause members to feel uncomfortable or to leave the group. There should be a process in place to enable group members to speak out about anything that is making them uncomfortable in the group, such as hurtful comments or behaviour from a staff member or group member. You might want to consider making the process anonymous so that group members feel more able to raise concerns.<br><br>Don't forget that your staff / volunteers can face bullying too, from each other or from group members. It's important to include them in your anti-bullying policy and procedures so they feel valued and can have their concerns addressed. | *Suggested evidence:*<br>• anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy<br>• restorative approaches training course certificates<br>• staff grievance procedure<br>• complaints policy and procedure |

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<tr><td colspan="2">3c. How do you look after group members' specific needs?<br>(e.g. disabilities, learning difficulties, mental or physical wellbeing needs, special circumstances such as caring for a family member)</td></tr>
<tr><td>It's likely that, at some point, at least one of your group members will need additional support as a result of a health condition, family situation or other circumstances. They might need you to put them in touch with a specialist organisation who can help with their needs, or you might need to make some adaptations so that they can make the most out of the activities you offer.<br><br>It's important not to make decisions about people's needs without including them in the discussion. Sometimes, well-meaning people can make assumptions about how best to help someone and inadvertently get it wrong. The person with the most knowledge about your group member's needs is the group member themselves!<br><br>Don't feel like you have to be able to provide everything directly – for example, it might be that the group member needs to bring someone with them to assist them with some specialist needs which your staff / volunteers aren't qualified to help with. This is something you can discuss with the group member and the people who usually assist them.</td><td>Suggested evidence:<ul><li>support plan for a group member (anonymised)</li><li>written or recorded testimony from a group member or their parent / carer about how the organisation has supported them</li><li>training certificates for specific issues relevant to your group members, e.g. mental health first aid, autism awareness, dementia friends</li><li>Carers' Friendly Tick award (see Resources section for more information about this)</li><li>evidence that your staff / volunteers can 'signpost' to other organisations for specific needs that can't be dealt with by the organisation (e.g. flyers or referral forms from other organisations)</li></ul></td></tr>
</table>

| 3d. How do you ensure your staff / volunteers understand what's expected of them, particularly in terms of their behaviour and attitude towards group members? | |
|---|---|
| While it's important to have policies in place to resolve problems and conflicts, it's even better if you can avoid these issues from happening in the first place. One way to do this is to ensure your staff and volunteers have clear, written documents setting out what is expected of them, so they feel confident in their roles and don't engage in behaviour that might make other people feel uncomfortable.<br><br>All staff members and volunteers should have a role or job description setting out their responsibilities. This benefits the staff and volunteers as well, as they won't be overloaded by tasks or left feeling bored and uncertain about what to do next.<br>For some roles, this might be a more generic description that applies to multiple volunteers; for example "toddler group helper" or "foodbank distribution assistant". If that's the case for your group, you'll need to think about how you allocate tasks during a session so that everything gets done and there's no duplication. Having a written rota for regular tasks such as 'washing up' and 'taking the bins out' can help make sure everyone knows who is doing what. | *Required evidence:*<br>• staff / volunteer role descriptions (anonymised)<br>• staff / volunteer code of conduct<br><br>*Suggested evidence:*<br>• team meeting records showing discussion about professional boundaries or similar<br>• staff / volunteer induction pack<br>• team rota for specific tasks (anonymised) |

# 4. Planning, Running and Evaluating Activities

Group members can become frustrated if sessions feel chaotic and disorganised. Planning ahead and communicating these plans effectively to your staff and volunteers can help to mitigate this. As part of your plans, you will need to ensure you have the right equipment for sessions to run effectively and safely. It's good practice to check your equipment regularly, rather than realising two minutes before a cookery session that the saucepan handles are loose and the spatulas are all missing!

As you plan your sessions, you will need to consider feedback from your group members (see Section 1) and the health and safety implications of any activities you would like to run (see Section 5).

After the event or session, you'll need to stop and think about how it went and what (if anything) you could do better next time. What was the impact of the session – in other words, what difference did it make to the people who attended? It's likely you will have to report back to your funders about activities and projects they have paid you to deliver, but even if you don't, you will need to have a good understanding of the impact of your activities so you can explain what you do to potential supporters. New volunteers will be more enthusiastic if they understand what difference your group makes to the local area or to a particular issue, and donors will be more willing to put their hands in their pockets for your cause.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">4a. How do you record and communicate your activity plans to staff / volunteers and group members?</td></tr>
<tr><td>This section is about how you ensure your staff, volunteers and group members know what is happening within your organisation – it would be very frustrating to spend a long time planning a trip for your group only to find they have all made other plans on that date!<br><br>There is a clear link to the earlier section on engagement and participation, as group members should have a chance to input their ideas for future sessions. You might also want to refer to some of your evidence from question 3d, where we considered how to make sure your staff and volunteers understand their role and responsibilities.<br><br>If your group runs on a ‘drop in’ basis (for instance a youth club with various activities for young people to choose from), you could provide evidence of how you let members know what activities are provided. For example, you could put photos on your social media page of your venue set up ready for a session.<br>You could also submit evidence of team meetings where you have discussed the activities on offer and perhaps made changes – for instance a themed craft table for Christmas or some outdoor games sessions for the summer.</td><td>Suggested evidence:<ul><li>team meeting records showing discussion about future sessions / events</li><li>monthly or termly programme of activities, or a screenshot of an online calendar</li><li>letters / flyers about an upcoming trip or event</li><li>written session plan for a regular activity</li><li>calendar showing volunteer availability (anonymised)</li></ul></td></tr>
</table>

| 4b. How do you ensure your venue, equipment and resources are safe and suitable for your planned activities? | |
|---|---|
| You should check your equipment and venue regularly to make sure everything is fit for purpose. If equipment becomes damaged or tattered, it should be repaired or replaced.<br><br>It's also important to take into consideration the limitations of your venue and equipment when planning activities and adapting your plans accordingly. For instance if you are organising a game of volleyball inside, your session plan should set out how you will minimise damage to windows, lighting fixtures etc. (e.g. by using a soft ball or having a rule about 'out of bound' areas). | *Suggested evidence:*<br>• equipment checklist<br>• PAT testing logs<br>• cleaning schedule<br>• session plan(s) with a list of equipment needed for each activity<br>• team meeting records or emails showing a discussion about replacing worn out equipment etc.<br>• a lease document explaining who is responsible for venue maintenance and repairs |

| 4c. How do you minimise risks during your activities? | |
|---|---|
| It's important to have written and dated risk assessments where you consider what risks could occur, how likely they are, and what the impact could be. The next step in the risk assessment process is to remove hazards or add control measures in order to minimise the likelihood and impact of the risk. This information should also be recorded so you can refer back to it and make sure you have done what you said you would.<br><br>For instance, if you have invited a guest to give a presentation to your group, the cables for the projector and computer could be a trip hazard. You could minimise the risk of someone tripping over them by taping them to the floor with brightly-coloured tape, and asking your group members to be careful when walking through that area. All of this should be recorded on your risk assessment, and the staff / volunteers running the session should have a copy of the risk assessment so they can make sure to take the necessary actions. | *Required evidence:*<br>• two completed risk assessments for different activities (e.g. one for a drop-in session and another for a trip / offsite activity) |

| 4d. How do you incorporate group member feedback into your planning? | |
|---|---|
| In Section 1, you considered how to collect feedback from your group members. However, it's no good just collecting feedback if nothing changes as a result! As you make plans for the future, you should use the feedback you've collected to shape your decisions. It's also a good idea to share this with group members so they can see how their feedback made a difference. | *Suggested evidence:*<br>• team meeting minutes showing discussion of group member feedback<br>• "you said, we did" pinboard, social media post or newsletter article telling group members about changes you have made as a result of their feedback |

| 4e. How do you evaluate the success of your activities? | |
|---|---|
| After each event or activity, you will need to spend some time reflecting and discussing how it went. The sooner you can do this, the better – a debriefing session straight after the session works much better than leaving it until the next team meeting, by which time you will have forgotten a lot! It doesn't have to be a long and drawn out process, it could be as simple as asking each staff member of volunteer for their 'highlight and lowlight' from the session.<br><br>In your debriefing session, you might also want to look back at the plan you made and see if you<br><br>Make notes and keep them for future reference, so you can make changes to your next session if needed. For example, if a volunteer said the planned craft activity was too difficult and the group members were frustrated, you'll want to make sure the next craft activity is pitched at a lower level of ability.<br><br>As we said in the introduction to this section, it's important to understand the difference you are making to your group members so you can communicate this to your supporters. Understanding your impact allows you to see which activities have the best outcomes and where improvements might be needed. It can also help you identify 'mission drift', where organisations stray away from their original objectives and get distracted by other issues or activities. | *Suggested evidence:*<br>• notes from a debriefing session<br>• a 'theory of change' plan showing how your activities contribute towards your long-term outcomes (see the Resources section for more about 'theory of change') |

# 5. Health and Safety

The phrase 'health and safety' often gets people rolling their eyes, but it's important to recognise that you have a duty of care to your staff, volunteers and group members. This means minimising harm, whether that's from an activity or from the environment it takes place in, and making sure you know what to do if an accident was to happen.

Fire safety is also an important factor, even if you don't own the buildings you use – you still need to make sure that everyone can get out safely and be accounted for if a fire was to break out.

Your health and safety policy should collect together all the ways in which you will try to keep people safe.

| 5a. Is your health and safety policy up-to-date and robust? | |
|---|---|
| A health and safety policy explains how your organisation will manage health and safety in your office (if applicable) and during your activities. It should set out clearly who does what, when and how – for example, who is responsible for checking that your group's equipment is fit for purpose, and how often they should check it.<br><br>Like all your policies, it should be signed by your chair of trustees or equivalent, and should contain the date of when it was agreed and a future date for it to be reviewed and updated.<br><br>In the Resources section of this document, you can find more information about writing policies. | *Required evidence:*<br>• health and safety policy |

| 5b. Do you have sufficient First Aid cover for your activities? | |
|---|---|
| It is important to ensure you have the right level of First Aid cover for your groups and activities. There are links in the Resources section to useful website which will help you understand what coverage you need based on the kind of activities you offer. | *Required evidence:*<br>• first aid training certificates |

| 5c. Do your staff / volunteers receive adequate training for their roles? | |
|---|---|
| Your organisation should keep records of any training staff / volunteers undertake, so that you can identify any gaps and ensure that training is kept up to date.<br><br>Some staff / volunteers, for example sports coaches or people preparing food, will need specific training in order to do their roles safely, and it is up to your organisation to make sure that staff / volunteers only take on roles they are qualified to do.<br><br>Training and development should be ongoing, and you should have regular conversations with your staff / volunteers about any training needs that might emerge. | *Suggested evidence:*<br>• staff / volunteer training logs<br>• food safety training certificates<br>• coach / instructor training certificates |

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">5d. Do you have adequate insurance cover in place?</th></tr>
<tr><td>
You should ensure that you have the right cover in place for the activities you run, so that you are covered in the event of an accident or incident.
All charities and community groups should have public liability insurance, and there are other legal requirements you might need to be aware of – for instance, you will need to check that staff / volunteers have the right car insurance in place if they are transporting group members in their own cars.
If you are purchasing services from another organisation (for example booking a coach or a canoeing trip for your group members), you will need to check that the company you're hiring has the right insurance in place.
If you come under an umbrella organisation – for instance a local youth club run on behalf of the parish council – your insurance might be covered by that organisation. If this is the case, you should submit a copy of their insurance certificate and a letter from the umbrella organisation confirming that your organisation is covered under their insurance.
</td><td>
Required evidence:
<ul><li>valid public liability insurance certificate</li></ul>
Suggested evidence (if applicable):
<ul><li>valid employer's liability insurance certificate</li>
<li>valid car / minibus insurance certificates, or, if staff / volunteers use their own vehicles, evidence that they have adequate insurance in place (this should be anonymised)</li></ul>
</td></tr>
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| 5e. How do you record and learn from accidents, incidents and near-misses? | |
|---|---|
| Accidents happen – it's impossible to mitigate every single risk. However, it's important to learn from accidents and near-misses to see if anything could have been done differently and if you could prevent the same thing happening again.<br><br>Recording accidents and incidents in a dedicated report book or electronically is also recommended by most insurance companies, as it can be used as evidence should there be a legal issue at a later date. They should be recorded as soon as possible after the incident, with as much detail as possible.<br><br>For organisations working with under 18s or adults at risk, it's also good practice to let group members' parents or carers know about an accident or incident involving the person they care for, ideally in writing. This is particularly important if any first aid was administered (e.g. a plaster put over a small cut), in case the group member suffers an adverse reaction later on. | *Required evidence:*<br>• accident / incident report template or blank page of an accident / incident report book<br><br>*Suggested evidence:*<br>• team meeting minutes discussing accident / incident reporting |

| 5f. How do you make sure everyone is accounted for in event of a fire? | |
|---|---|
| Your fire risk assessment should help to minimise the risk of a fire happening in the first place, but you also need an evacuation plan showing how you would ensure the safety of your staff, volunteers and group members if a fire broke out.<br><br>Your plan should take into account the limitations of your venue(s), for instance if it doesn't have a fire alarm, you might need to give whistles to some of your volunteers so they can raise the alarm.<br>If you use more than one venue, you may need to have a different plan for each one.<br><br>You also need to communicate your evacuation plan to your group members so they know what to do when the alarm is sounded (e.g. by conducting fire drills, particularly when new members have joined). | *Required evidence:*<br>• fire risk assessment<br>• fire evacuation plan<br><br>*Suggested evidence:*<br>• fire drill records<br>• photos of wall signs explaining where the fire assembly point is<br>• fire extinguisher testing logs<br>• fire officer training certificates |

# 6. Collecting and Storing Data

As part of your activities, you will no doubt amass all kinds of data about your staff, volunteers and group members – from their dates of birth to their current address, as well as photos. All of this is considered sensitive data and has to be handled and stored with care and according to government legislation. Mishandling data is not only disrespectful to your group members, who have trusted you with their information, it could also potentially lead to a fine.

| 6a. Is your data protection policy up-to-date and robust? | |
|---|---|
| Your policy should explain what data you collect and why, how long you keep it for, and how you dispose of old data safely.<br><br>When you draw up your policy, you might also want to consider what should be done with any data if your organisation was to stop running – this is particularly important for short-term projects that might have limited funding.<br><br>It's important to note that records that might be needed as part of a safeguarding investigation (for instance attendance records from one of your sessions) should be kept "as long as necessary", in accordance with legislation.<br><br>Like all your policies, it should be signed by your chair of trustees or equivalent, and should contain the date of when it was agreed and a future date for it to be reviewed and updated.<br><br>In the Resources section of this document, you can find more information about writing data protection policies. | *Required evidence:*<br>• data protection policy, compliant with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)<br><br>*Suggested evidence:*<br>• evidence that you are registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) (where relevant) |

| 6b. How do you tell your group members why you are collecting their data and what you will be using it for? | |
|---|---|
| Under UK GDPR, your group members have a right to know what you are using their data for and why you need it, and they should be told this at the point where they hand over their data (for example when they fill out a membership form).<br><br>You should have a clear statement explaining why you are collecting the data and what it will be used for. This statement should be in simple language that is accessible to everyone – don't use too much jargon.<br><br>If you are working with under 18s or adults at risk, you may want to show the privacy statement to their parent or carer as well as to the group member, so you can put them at ease regarding the data you have collected about the person they care for. (This will depend on the type of services you are offering and you should balance it with your group members' right to confidentiality.) | *Required evidence:*<br>• privacy statement (this could be part of a membership / consent form) |

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">6c. How do you store data safely and restrict access to only those who have a legitimate need to use it?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Once you have collected the data, you also need to store it safely and only allow access to people who have a legitimate need for it.<br><br>For example, you could scan membership forms and keep them in an online storage system like Dropbox or OneDrive, which allows you to select who you want to share it with. You can also password-protect electronic documents and folders which contain sensitive data; to prevent anyone who might borrow your computer from accidentally opening them!<br><br>If staff / volunteers leave the organisation, you should make sure their access to any sensitive files is taken away (e.g. by changing passwords or ensuring they hand over their keys when they leave).</td><td>Required evidence:<br>• data storage procedure / description of how you store data safely<br><br>Suggested evidence:<br>• screenshots showing the password protection on an electronic folder<br>• list of key-holders for a filing cabinet</td></tr>
</table>

| 6d. How do you gain consent from group members? | |
|---|---|
| You should gain written consent from group members for their participation in activities, as well as consent for you to store and use their data.<br><br>You need to make sure that the consent form is very clear about what they are consenting to – a good way to do this is to use tick boxes with statements next to them, such as “I give permission for Group X to contact me about future activities”. This way, the group member can tick which statements they agree to and leave off any they don’t want to agree to.<br><br>For group members who are under 16, you should gain consent from their parent or carer. (Young people aged 16+ are usually able to give their own consent, particularly if they are living independently.) | *Required evidence:*<br>• membership / consent forms (this could be one form or two separate forms) |

# 7. Governance and Finance

Many groups run fantastic activities, but fall down when it comes to good governance. It's often time-consuming and not as interesting as the practical side of the work, but without it your group might not be around to support people in the future. The Charity Governance Code states that good governance "enables and supports a charity's compliance with the law and relevant regulations" and "promotes a culture in which everything works towards fulfilling the charity's vision."[1] In other words, good governance is a crucial part of making a difference to your group members.

It starts with making sure your group has a clear purpose and direction, but you also need a committed trustee board or management committee who can lead by example and make the (sometimes difficult) decisions needed to ensure your group's success.

[1] Charity Governance Code: https://www.charitygovernancecode.org/en/front-page

| 7a. Does your organisation have a constitution or governing document? | |
|---|---|
| A governing document such as a constitution sets out the purpose of your organisation, how it will achieve what it is setting out to do, and who is in charge of running it. It should also explain what to do if your organisation wishes or needs to stop running.<br>It is a legal document and can only be changed by agreement of your organisation's management committee / trustees<br><br>Even small volunteer-led groups can benefit from having a constitution, as it is a useful document to refer back to at meetings if your organisation starts to drift from its original focus.<br><br>Your governing document should be signed by your chair of trustees or equivalent, and should contain the date of when it was agreed and a future date for it to be reviewed and updated.<br><br>In the Resources section of this document, you can find more information about governing documents and links to template constitutions for community groups. Larger charities and social enterprises may need to seek professional legal advice. | *Required evidence:*<br>• constitution / governing document |

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">7b. Does your organisation have committee members / board members / trustees who can bring experience and knowledge to the management of the organisation?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Trustees should be chosen because of the skills, knowledge and experience they can bring to the role, which can benefit your organisation. This doesn’t necessarily mean they all have to have a related profession – you might have a trustee who used to be a group member and can bring their lived experience to the role.<br><br>For social enterprises who don’t have trustee boards, you might want to submit some background information about your directors instead.</td><td>Suggested evidence:<br>• trustee biographies with a brief paragraph about their background and experience – this could be a screenshot of an “About our Board” section on your website, or a section from your annual report</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">7c. How does your organisation keep account of income and expenditure?</td></tr>
<tr><td>However big or small your organisation is, you should be aiming to run within your means so that your organisation is sustainable and will be around for your group members for years to come. To achieve this, you need to have a good understanding of how much income your organisation brings in each year and how much you are spending.</td><td>Required evidence:<br>• most recent accounts, profit-loss sheets or treasurer’s report from an annual meeting</td></tr>
</table>

| 7d. How does your organisation ensure that cash is handled appropriately and accounted for properly? | |
|---|---|
| Many charitable organisations are reliant on cash, particularly those that take 'subs' payments from group members or run cafés and tuck shops. All of this money belongs to the organisation and should be treated as such – for instance, not leaving it unattended.<br><br>Your organisation should have a cash handling policy which sets out who is responsible for the cash, and ensure it is counted in a secure place by two unrelated people. If your organisation runs public fundraisers such as street collections, your policy should also explain how that money is accounted for (e.g. using sealed collecting boxes).<br><br>The Fundraising Regulator has some useful advice on their website about cash handling – please see the Resources section for links. | *Required evidence:*<br>• cash handling policy<br><br>*Suggested evidence:*<br>• records of 'subs' payments from group members, or payments made towards a residential / trip (these should be anonymised)<br>• staff / volunteer expenses policy |

# Additional Evidence *(optional)*

You can submit up to 5 additional pieces of evidence to show off your organisation. This is a great place to put annual reports, award certificates, photos of your projects in action, or other things that demonstrate how your organisation goes above and beyond.

Please make sure to include a written description of the evidence to give your assessor some context, e.g. "photos of group members on our annual beach trip, July 2019". If you are submitting your evidence digitally, please add the description to the file name.

You must have full consent for any photos shared as part of your evidence.

# Resources

Below are some web links where you can find more information that might help you as you work your way through the programme. They are intended as general advice, not legal guidance, and Voluntary Norfolk cannot be held responsible for the content on any of these sites.

***Engagement and Participation***

- NPC – User involvement
  Blog posts and resources about involving service users in your organisation, including tips on writing surveys, effective co-design, and being 'people-first'
- NCVO KnowHow – Co-production and service user involvement
  Advice and further links, including a useful chart developed by the New Economic Foundation explaining the different levels of co-production

- UK Youth – Building a culture of youth engagement
  A blog post about what good youth engagement looks like, with links to other useful websites
- National Youth Agency – Hear by Right framework
  A development tool to help you think through how young people can participate in decision-making in your organisation. A lot of it would also apply to working with adults (i.e. engaging group members in decision-making). The framework is free to download, and you can choose to go for the Hear by Right Award, which has a cost involved.

***Safeguarding***

- Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership (NSCP)
  Advice and training for organisations working with children, young people and families
  - NSCP Safer Programme
    The Safer Programme (part of the NSCP) provides safeguarding advice and support to groups in Norfolk who work with under 18s. They can also share policy templates.
- Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board (NSAB)
  Advice about safeguarding adults at risk, and links to recommended safeguarding adults training
- NSPCC Safeguarding Checklist
  A useful tool for ensuring you have all the policies and procedures you need to keep children safe

***Valuing People***

- NCVO Knowhow – Get started with equity, diversity and inclusion
  Information for charities and community groups, including definitions of key terms, explanation of charities' legal duties and links to further guidance

- NPC – Diversity, equity and inclusion
  Resources and blog posts aimed at charities and community organisations, including advice about how to make your governance structure more diverse
- Equality and Human Rights Commission – Advice and guidance
  A drop-down list of resources on a wide range of subjects, from adjustments for disabled people to support for refugees and asylum-seekers
- Norfolk Community Advice Network
  A Norfolk-wide partnership of agencies providing advice. You may want to have a look at the directory if you have group members whose needs are beyond the scope of your organisation – there are lots of organisations who you can refer to, on a wide range of topics such as housing, benefits, mental health, relationships, and substance misuse.
- Caring Together – Carer's Friendly Tick award
  Information about the award, which helps community groups, employers and other organisations to demonstrate that they are carer-aware and offer support to carers in their organisation
- UK Youth - #Youngandblack campaign
  Information about YUK Youth's campaign to ensure young Black people can have their voices heard and their achievements celebrated. You can also download resources to help you have conversations about racism with young people, or to help eradicate racism in your organisation.
- GMCVO – Inclusive language guidance
  Guidance about how to ensure your language is inclusive when talking about race and disability. The guides were put together by organisations and individuals in Greater Manchester.
- Momentum guide to involving young volunteers
  A PDF guide to working with volunteers under 18 – please contact Momentum (part of Voluntary Norfolk) if you'd like us to email this to you.

***Planning, Running and Evaluating Activities***

- Momentum Youth Kit and Activity Kit
  Downloadable kits containing advice about running a youth club and ideas for games and group activities for young people
- NCVO – How to plan a charity event
  Community-made 'how to' guide about planning a one-off event
- Norfolk Community Foundation – Planning and reporting on your project
  Some useful FAQs about how to show the difference your project has made, including some advice on writing case studies
- NCVO KnowHow – How to build a theory of change
  A detailed explanation of the 'theory of change' model with some helpful links to other resources. Voluntary Norfolk can also broker 'theory of change' training for your team if this is something you are interested in.
- Centre for Youth Impact
  A useful website for organisations working with young people, to help you consider how you can make a difference to your group members' lives. The website includes lot of resources about evaluating your impact and improving practice for youth workers.

***Health and Safety***

- HSE – Information about health and safety at work
  Provides information and advice as well as guidance on writing a Health and Safety Policy and risk assessments
- Brighton Resource Centre – Running a community building
  Guidance for anyone running a community building, including advice on risk assessments and public liability
- Food Standards Agency – Managing food safety
  Tips about food safety and links to further advice, including training courses

- Community Action Norfolk – Insurance for village halls
  Some key things to consider when deciding what insurance cover you need. This was written for village halls, but most of it applies to a wide range of community organisations.

***Collecting and Storing Data***

- Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)
  The Information Commissioner's Office provides advice and guidance around Data Protection and how to ensure you are compliant with the Data Protection Act (2018) / UK GDPR
- CAF – Tips for staying compliant with GDPR
  A useful infographic from the Charities Aid Foundation with reminders about GDPR responsibilities

***Governance and Finance***

- NCVO KnowHow – Getting started in governance
  Essential information for practicing effective governance
- Charity Commission – How to write a governing document
  Step-by-step guide to writing a governing document for a charity, including templates for different types of document
- Charity Governance Code – Principle 2: Leadership
  Advice on good leadership, with separate sections for larger and smaller charities
- Brighton Resource Centre – Managing money
  Advice for community groups and small charities on all sorts of money-related topics, from opening a bank account and appointing a treasurer to funding applications and preparing annual accounts