

WHAT KIND OF GROUP?

A VOLUNTARY GROUP/ ORGANISATION

Setting up a group larger than a self-help group needs more care because of the number of people that will be involved and the possible legal structures that might be needed in the future, e.g. registration as a charity with the Charity Commission.

Charity status, however, is not usually the first step for a voluntary organisation and might never be relevant. Any group of people may join together to pursue objectives in which they share an interest, providing these objectives are legal. It is therefore possible to establish a voluntary organisation without informing anyone or obtaining permission. You can just get on and do it.

However, just as every individual person is bound by the laws, whether they know them or not, so are group activities. The laws that will affect groups are:

- ◆ tax law
- ◆ libel
- ◆ contract law
- ◆ copyright
- ◆ employment law
- ◆ property law

All these laws may affect groups at some stage and depending on the type of activity to be undertaken there are some other more specialist laws.

In addition, there are practical matters of organisation which all groups will need to address:

- ◆ what is the organisation set up to achieve?
- ◆ who is entitled to become a member?
- ◆ who is to manage the project?
- ◆ how is the management committee to be elected?
- ◆ what form of accounts will be kept and who will examine or audit them?
- ◆ what are the procedures for holding meetings
- ◆ what happens if the group folds?

Drawing up a written agreement between members to address the above will enable the group to operate and clarify what sort of organisation has been established. This is called the constitution and establishes the legal structure of the group.

Links can provide more information, help and advice. Contact us if you need any further assistance

Links believes that this information is correct at the time of publication, however details may change. You are advised to contact Links for the up to date position and seek legal advice where appropriate.

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09/04/2003



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