

# information sheet 8.10

## Managing your own Community Centre

This information sheet aims to provide an overview of the various elements involved in managing a community centre. At this point, you will already have a Centre which is up and running, however, you and your committee should now be concerned with how it is properly managed and run.

### Your organisation

The first thing that you need to consider is the status of your group. Are you a constituted group and does your governing document, your objects, allow you to manage/ run the Centre? It is important that the committee understands and feels confident about the roles and responsibilities they are about to undertake. Considering all responsibilities will help managers to:

- Make managing your building easier
- Be prepared for crisis or change
- Be sure that resources are in place
- Improve the services that you provide

This information sheet provides an overview of what is involved when managing a building, however the committee must be fully aware of all its legal and financial responsibilities and explore the following issues in greater depth before making any decisions.

### Forms of Tenure:

There are 3 main forms to consider:

- Buying the property
- Entering into a lease
- Entering into a use and occupation license with the owner

### The Lease – the most common form

If you are taking on a Lease Agreement, you must be satisfied that you understand it and are clear what responsibilities are involved. Things to consider are:

- Rent (how much?)
- Duration of lease (how long?)
- Responsibility for repairs (your organisation? or the Landlord?)
- Running costs (heating? lighting?)

### Finances

When you are managing your building, you must be aware of the resources that you have available. There are many things you have to budget for, including:

- Costs for salaries (if you have employees)
- Running costs, such as heating and lighting
- Maintenance of the building, including fixing furniture and equipment
- Insurance (buildings, contents, employers liability, public liability)

A realistic budget will be able to help you plan your finances: it will detail what you expect to spend and also what you expect to come in (during the year)

How will you bring in your own income? Do you have reserves for unexpected costs? Items of equipment can be broken or services can break down, so it is important to be prepared.

Funders want to see that you are generating your own income, ie: from

groups using the Centre, which demonstrates that you are not grant reliant.

### Rates and Taxes

As part of the financial forecasting, you must include rates and taxes which you may be liable to pay, including corporation tax, income tax, capital gains tax, value added tax and business rates.

Also, if you have employees, you will have to make payments to the Inland Revenue for income tax and national insurance. (for more details see p3)

### People

There are different people who you must consider when managing the Centre. With regards to staff and volunteers, you must ensure that they have clear job descriptions and understand their roles and responsibilities. You must also ensure that your staff and volunteers are treated in a humane and supportive manner and feel valued for the contribution that they make.

- **Staff:** Will you need paid members of staff to run the Centre, eg: a caretaker to open and close the Centre or a cleaner to keep the building looking in good shape? If you have paid members of staff, you will need to have employment policies and contracts in place. You will also need to ensure that you have a payroll procedure and a management structure in place.

- **Volunteers:** Do you have volunteers who help to run activities in the Centre? There should be policies in place to protect the volunteers, which should also include details of volunteers expenses etc.

- **Users:** Are there good information points for users? Can they find out when the building is open, what activities are

going on, how to ask for other information? Is there a signing – in and out sheet to record who is in the building at one time – this comes under fire regulations.

- **Children and young people** – There will be a range of children and young people who will using the Centre and its services. It is important that there are the correct child protection policies in place and that people who are in contact with children are CRB checked. (see info sheet 8.4 for more details).

There are many policies & procedures that you should implement to maintain and improve the care of your staff and volunteers:

- Grievance/ disciplinary procedure
- Complaints procedure
- Support and supervision/ Appraisal procedure
- Equal opportunities policy

There are also a range of policies which will aid your organisation in providing a safe environment for your users:

- Health and Safety
- Risk assessment
- Security
- First aid
- Fire and emergency evacuation

As a manager of a building, you must fulfil your legal obligations and ensure it is a safe place for all.

### The Building

There needs to be plans in place to ensure that the building is maintained and well looked after. Otherwise, it will begin to look shabby, things start to break, which may become a risk to users. It is a good idea to develop a maintenance plan, which will detail:

who is responsible for minor repairs, inside and outside the building, who you can report repairs to and who makes sure that they are done. You need to ensure that your building has a complete 'health – check' at least every two years, although the essential services should be checked annually.

The provision of heating and lighting is also important, both for saving money and helping the environment. If your organisation has efficient insulation and heating systems, it will cost less money to heat the Centre and it will save energy for the environment.

You also need to ensure that your building is kept clean and tidy. Users can be put off if communal spaces are dirty or messy and they can also become a health hazard. You want to create a welcoming feeling in your centre, rather than it be off – putting because of dirt and bad maintenance.

### **Furniture and equipment:**

When you are furnishing your Centre, you must keep your users in mind. You want to create a Centre that is welcoming and comfortable, however, it also needs to be practical and serviceable.

When considering the different functions of the Centre, there will be a range of different equipment needed, such as kitchen equipment, playgroup equipment, electrical equipment, fire equipment etc. An additional issue that you must consider is identifying some storage space to keep all the equipment. Storage space will help you building to remain tidy and will also help to maintain safety.

As you will see, there are many practical things that need to be considered in running and managing your community centre. Some elements may not seem as important as others, however, they are all vital in maintaining the safety and wellbeing of users in the Centre.

All the policies, procedures, rules and guidelines will go a long way in providing an open and accessible Centre where people feel welcomed and the services are utilised by all.

### **For additional information:**

#### **① Managing your Community Building**

A practical handbook for people running buildings in local communities.

Peter Hudson – 3rd Edition (Community Matters)

#### **① Occupying Community Premises**

Guidelines for Community Associations and Local Authorities

Second Edition (Community Matters)

**① Voluntary not Amateur** – a guide to the law for voluntary organisations and community groups.

Hayes and Reason 7th Edition (LVSC)

**① [www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk)** - for information about customs and tax.

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