



INTRODUCTION TO

CONSTITUTIONS

from Engage Renfrewshire

WHAT IS A CONSTITUTION?

A 'constitution' is basically a written agreement between an association and its members. It can sometimes be referred to as the rules of the association.

It will outline a number of things including how new members can join the association and who is eligible, how the Management Committee is elected, and what happens with the finances of the association.

In simple terms the constitution will :

- highlight the overall purpose or vision of the association (its reason for existing in the first place)
- describe how the association will be managed and controlled
- state what the association, its members, and its Management Committee, can and cannot do

Point to remember

It's important to keep the constitution as flexible as possible, because to change or add anything requires the consent of the membership.

For example; employing staff may be a long-term goal but including this in the constitution at an earlier stage avoids the process of having to add it later.



COMMON REFERENCES (OR 'CLAUSES') FOUND IN A CONSTITUTION

- The aims and objectives of the group; the overall purpose of the group and information about the services or activities the group will provide for its members. If the association intends to apply for charitable status then the wording of this clause needs to meet certain standards - **refer to our Introduction To Becoming a Charity for further information.**
- The powers of the Management Committee; what they are allowed to do on behalf of the members e.g. employ staff, rent accommodation etc.
- Who can join and how to join; details about who is eligible to join e.g. anyone over 18 from the local area and how to apply e.g. complete a membership application form
- Information on the Management Committee including how it will be set up; the positions on the committee e.g. chairperson, secretary, treasurer, and how they are elected e.g. someone nominates, someone else seconds, the membership votes etc.
- The quorum; this is the minimum number of members that must be present at a meeting in order for it to go ahead. It's important to ensure that the number is reasonably representative of the membership.
- A dissolution clause; what will happen with anything belonging to the association if it were to close. This includes any money left in the bank account and equipment or resources. The clause must state that they will be transferred to another charitable association with similar aims and objectives.
- Adoption; the constitution needs to be dated and signed as accurate by two committee members e.g. the chairperson and secretary.