

Action in rural Sussex



Introduction

Welcome to the Childcare Committee Support Pack. This document is intended to be helpful support for those who have volunteered to manage and sustain their local childcare group. It was written by Caroline Rix – rural childcare development officer at Action in rural Sussex, and a former chair of a village playgroup – on behalf of West Sussex County Council Early Childhood Service. This pack collates and summarises information and guidance from many sources, the majority originating from government. These sources are frequently easy to download from the internet but are substantial in nature. This pack aims to be a straightforward source of information for childcare committee members. It is intended that you can briefly read the pack for quick answers or at length for greater depth and further signposting.

There are six sections, each one with a number of subsections. Looking through the Contents page on the right will give you an idea of the areas that you need to be aware of. At the end of each section there is a 'health check'. The questions posed summarise many of the key points and next to these (in the 'action to take' column) there are answers, as well as help on where to find information. You will also find web addresses and titles of useful down-loadable texts. Working through the 'health checks' will give you a good overview. You should also gain a useful overview from the first part of **Section 1: Getting started**. It gives a 'snap shot' of what you need to know if you are new to a childcare committee.

The key text that you need to have alongside this support pack is the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage*. It contains the 'specific legal requirements' and the 'statutory guidance to which providers should have regard'. It is a central part of the government's 10-year strategy for childcare (see also *Next Steps – Building on the 10-year Strategy* and the *Childcare Act 2006*). It is referred to frequently and is easy to get hold of in paper or electronic form.

The children are at the heart of each group. It is in their best interests – and the interests of the staff/practitioners and parents/carers – that committee members who are themselves parents should be aware of the law, their roles and legal responsibilities. It is essential that the committee understand what actions are required for sustainability (keeping the childcare debt-free and open). Please try to focus on these actions as an interconnected team rather than as a hierarchy; it should not rest on the shoulders of one or two people.

The committee are collectively responsible as the Ofsted 'Registered Person'. Decide and agree your priorities and action tasks and carry them out; work your way through the tasks, making sure the workload is shared. Remember, some people volunteer easily, some people like to be asked and some people need to be asked. Remember too, that a solitary heroic leader who takes all the responsibility for the setting is bad for continuity and a nightmare to replace.

Share the workload and everyone will benefit.

- If you are in any doubt always ask or seek advice, particularly when dealing with Ofsted, HMRC, or any safeguarding or employment issues.
- Ask before you take action.
- Do not agree to do things if you cannot deliver.
- Turn up to meetings.
- Listen.
- Do your fair share.

This can be about making new friends, but remember not everyone can get on all of the time!

There have been, and will continue to be, many changes around childcare. To keep pace with ongoing changes, sign up for email alerts from the various government websites. It is important to remember that a paper trail is sensible, and that ignorance of the law is no defence.

There are aspects of running a voluntary childcare group that are tough but you are providing an essential community service. The importance of this role means that at the end of your tenure you need to hand over to the next committee in a straightforward and effective manner. We very much hope that this pack will assist you in achieving this goal, and in running the committee in the meantime! Best of luck with it all. You are doing a very important job.

For more information about the support that Action in rural Sussex offers to childcare and rural communities, (including community buildings, community action planning, affordable housing and sustainable communities as a whole), go to www.ruralsussex.org.uk or telephone 01273 473422.

For childcare support from West Sussex County Council call the Children's/Family Information Service on 01243 777807.

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Contents

1 The Childcare Management Committee

- 1.1 Getting started 1
- 1.2 Becoming a member of the committee and working effectively 3
- 1.3 The constitution – what is it? 5
- 1.4 Committee roles and responsibilities 7
- 1.5 Becoming and operating as a charity 15
- 1.6 The Childcare Management Committee health check 16

2 "Getting it right legally"

- 2.1 Legal form, status and structure 17
- 2.2 Legal forms that may be suitable for childcare organisations 18
- 2.3 The legal responsibilities of a childcare committee 19
- 2.4 Relevant legislation 19
- 2.5 "Getting it right legally" health check 22

3 Regulation and regulatory bodies

- 3.1 The Childcare Act 2006, Ofsted registration and the Early Years Foundation Stage 23
- 3.2 The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), Disclosure and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (the new vetting and barring scheme and the Independent Safeguarding Authority) 26
- 3.3 The Charity Commission and the Charities Act 2006 29
- 3.4 Trustee/committee liability 30
- 3.5 Regulatory bodies health check 32

4 Running the business

- 4.1 Business planning, budgets, and cash flow 33
- 4.2 Annual accounts and reporting 37
- 4.3 The Free Entitlement (FE) for three- and four-year-olds 37
- 4.4 Premises 39
- 4.5 Insurance 40
- 4.6 Marketing 41
- 4.7 Fundraising (including funding applications) 43
- 4.8 Running the business health check 45

5 Employing staff

- 5.1 The committee as employers 47
- 5.2 Recruitment 49
 - Job description 49
 - Application forms 49
 - How to attract the right applicants 50
 - Interviewing procedure 51
- 5.3 Terms and conditions (Contract of employment and the Written Statement) 52
- 5.4 Staff induction 53
- 5.5 Staff appraisal/performance review 55
- 5.6 Training plans 58
- 5.7 Disciplinary and grievance procedures and the Employment Act 2008 59
- 5.8 Paying employees (Tax, NI and payroll) 62
- 5.9 Keeping the right staff records 64
- 5.10 Employing staff health check 65

6 Assuring quality

- 6.1 A brief summary of the development of the Childcare/Early Years sector 69
- 6.2 The Early Years foundation stage and Ofsted inspection and monitoring role 70
- 6.3 The curriculum, reflective practice and making sure all the children are included 75
- 6.4 Policies and Procedures 79
- 6.5 Safeguarding children – child protection – ContactPoint and CAF 82
- 6.6 Health and safety and risk assessment 87
- 6.7 Quality assurance schemes 90
- 6.8 Communicating with parents and carers – the prospectus/welcome pack 93
- 6.9 Assuring quality health check 97

i Further information

- Having trouble finding committee members? – some suggestions and ideas 101
- Handing over to a new chair list 102
- Useful websites 103
- Contacting Ofsted 104
- Useful email addresses 104
- CRB disclosure information 104
- Glossary 105

While every care has been taken in compiling these notes, Action in rural Sussex cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions; the notes are not intended to be a substitute for specific legal advice.

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