



Does your group have a Code of Conduct?

Dec 21, 2016

I often say to community groups: 'If you have no other policy documents in place...at least have a Code of Conduct!', as this one simple document can be very helpful in preventing and dealing with any problem behaviour of members within your group.

A Code of Conduct spells out expected standards of behaviour of group members. It is usually underpinned by the group's Values (where these have been articulated). It may even go to the extent of describing examples of what is OK and what is not OK, in terms of behaviour that would reflect or contradict the organisation's Values.

Include it in your Welcome Pack for new members and revisit it periodically with existing members, so that everyone is aware of the expectations that are placed on them with regard to their behaviour within the group.

If someone's behaviour is causing concern, talk to them about it in the context of the Code of Conduct, pointing out to them how their behaviour is in breach of the Code, and explain to them what they need to do differently to comply with it. If the problem persists, your Code of Conduct will be key to the disciplinary process you would potentially initiate next.

If you don't have a Code of Conduct yet, don't reinvent the wheel when developing one – you will find plenty of examples with a quick search on the internet, which you can use as a starting point to develop your own.

Problem behaviour within community groups can all too often derail groups and make it very difficult for the committee to manage the group and deliver on its purposes. So use a Code of Conduct to set the scene from the start; to minimise the likelihood that problems will arise; and, if issues do still occur, use it as a tool to deal with them appropriately.