

Shed Management Committees

Any community or voluntary organisation needs a committee of people who will organise how the group is run – that includes your new Shed. Most Sheds initially set up as an Unincorporated Association and as such, can then run as a fairly informal group with the work shared out amongst the committee as a whole – and the more people who are actively involved from the outset, the better. This is to ensure that decisions that are made are done so in a democratic way and that all committee members take collective responsibility for the Shed.

A committee usually works well when there are around 6-12 members – but this can change over time subject to the size of your Shed. From these members, your Shed needs to elect its Honorary Officers – which might sound rather grand, but essentially is three people who have specific responsibilities as well as being management committee members. These are:

- Chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer

Some organisations choose to have a Vice-Chair as well, or perhaps have some form of wording in the Constitution that covers what happens if a deputy is needed.

The information here is a starting point for discussion about what needs to be done and who will do it.

The responsibilities of the Shed Management Committee:

- The committee should meet as often as is stated in the constitution. This would normally be often enough so that the committee knows exactly what is going on within the Shed - but not so often that nothing happens except meetings!
- If your constitution states that your organisation has a membership (this is usual for Sheds), then your committee members usually come from amongst the membership.
- Your constitution should state how committee members are voted on to the committee and for how long they serve.

The committee as a whole has a responsibility to:

- meet! - this sounds obvious but if the committee doesn't meet regularly then it can't manage the running of the Shed properly.
 - ensure the Shed follows its aims and objectives
 - carries out its aims in accordance with the law
 - ensures the Shed manages its finances properly
 - ensure that activities carried out and decisions made are in the best interest of the Shed and its membership and not any individual member of the committee
 - if necessary, the committee can organise sub-committees to take on specific tasks such as finance or for organising an event.
-
- It is important to note that even if an organisation employs staff, the ultimate responsibility lies with the management committee.
 - Having an induction process for new management committee members can help to involve them properly from the start. You could have an introduction pack which includes your constitution, all the organisations policies and recent accounts. Ensure that new members aren't bombarded with lots of jargon.
 - If your Shed later decides to become a registered charity or a Charitable Incorporate Organisation (CIO) then your organisation must abide by charity law. Officially your Management Committee members are then known as charity trustees. The Charity Commission publishes a leaflet called

“Responsibility of Charity Trustees”. However, if you are not a registered charity it doesn't mean that you can be irresponsible and mismanage the organisation. Following charity law is good practice for all voluntary organisations.

Some common management committee behaviour:

The strongest committees work as a team – the work is spread around, everyone is playing a part and you are all getting on with each other. This is easier said than done, and doesn't just happen by itself – it takes time and thought.

One of the key factors is regular, open and full discussion at your committee meetings. Try to make sure that everyone is involved in decisions about the work of the Shed, and how responsibilities and jobs will be divided up.

Power: You need to avoid the danger of having one person wanting to control the organisation and everything it does. This is often the person who first had the idea for the organisation and finds it difficult to let go.

Laziness: There will inevitably be someone who does not pull his or her weight at some point in time and others may feel they are leaving everything to someone else. Ensure that you have an open but honest “right to challenge” and “right to step away” relationship from the outset between yourselves. Everyone has other commitments – some regular, some come and go – but working with each other to use your individual strengths, time capacity and abilities when you can, makes the Shed collective stronger.

The Quiet One: Being a committee member can be quite daunting for some people. Make sure new members are not overwhelmed by what they've taken on and are given as much support as possible.

First Steps: A useful starting point might be to discuss the different Honorary Officers role descriptions outlined in this sheet, and adapt and develop them to suit your committee and Shed members.

The Chair's job usually falls into four main areas:

1. **Chairing meetings** - Chairing meetings is the most visible role of the Chair. Your job is to help the meeting to run smoothly and effectively, the committee get through the agenda and involve everyone. Here are some central points:
 - Plan and think about the meeting in advance and try to be aware of questions that may be raised by the committee.
 - Prepare an agenda.
 - Make sure the meeting gets through all the necessary business.
 - Clarify specific points, especially any names, acronyms or processes that might be unclear, especially to new committee members.
 - Encourage participation by everyone - make sure everyone gets a chance to talk and no one dominates.
 - Make sure clear decisions are reached and any actions noted.
 - Start and finish on time.
 - Remember to thank everyone for their time and effort. Committee members are volunteering their time and we all like to be valued.

2. **Helping the committee to work together as a team** - The strongest committees work as a team. The Chair is an important part of the team, but is not the boss. It is not your role to make all the decisions, or do all the work. It is your role to encourage and involve all committee members in whatever way they are able to contribute.

3. **Having an overview of the work of the group** - The day-to-day work of the group is important, but someone needs to be thinking about the bigger picture. It's not up to the Chair to decide the direction and activity of the Shed, but to help the committee work this out collectively. Regularly remind yourself of your aims, and think about what needs to be done to achieve them. Some ways of doing this are:
 - Once a year, have a discussion at the committee about the group's plans for the coming year. What are the main things you want to achieve?
 - Have a regular item on the agenda to discuss how recent events and activities went.

4. **Being the main contact person for the group** - The Chair is often the first point of contact for the Shed – for anyone from the council, health professionals, other voluntary organisations or anyone else interested in the work of the group. You might be asked to attend other groups' events, or to represent the Shed at other events.

It is important the Chair is supported by the rest of the committee and doesn't take on too much of this type of work, as this can lead to burn-out. It's not the Chair's job to take all of this on by themselves. Any requests to be involved in other things should be discussed with other committee members, see if it is something the Shed as a group wants to do and if so, who is best person to do it.

Shed Management Committees: The Secretary

The Secretary's job usually falls into three main areas:

1. **Taking minutes at meetings** - Usually the main job of the secretary is to keep minutes (notes) of meetings and to distribute them to management committee members. Minutes are simply notes taken during the meeting to remind you what was discussed and agreed.

A few central points to remember are:

- Don't try to write everything down – it's impossible and not useful.
 - Concentrate on getting down what has been decided, and who is going to do it.
 - Listen carefully to the discussion and think about what overall points are being made.
2. **Keeping people informed** - There is a basic level of communication needed in every Shed and the Secretary works closely with the Chair to ensure that everyone knows what they need to! For example -
 - Committee members need to know the date, time and place of the next meeting, and receive minutes and an agenda.
 - The people you are trying to reach and include in your group need to know you exist, what you are doing, and how to contact you and get involved.
 - How much, and what sort of publicity you need will depend on exactly what you are trying to do. It's not up to the Secretary to make all the decisions about your publicity and communication – the committee as a whole needs to think about this, and divide up and delegate tasks.
 - There are also lots of different ways of communicating with each other. You need to work out what suits your members best, and might want to use a mix of different methods, such as social media as well as printed flyers. Giving the role of Marketing Officer or Facebook manager to another committee member is a good way of dividing up the workload.
 3. **Receiving and responding to information, emails and letters** - The Secretary, along with the Chair, is often the contact for information from other organisations or any formal communication with the group.

The Secretary and Chair are also often the advertised contacts for people interested in joining the group.

The Secretary's role is to make sure that any information they receive is dealt with. This doesn't necessarily mean doing it all yourself, but making sure that someone is. For example, an invitation to attend an event could go to the next committee meeting and an enquiry from someone interested in joining the Shed could be passed on to another committee member who is happy to meet and greet new potential Sheddors.

Shed Management Committee: The Treasurer

The Treasurer has the day-to-day responsibility of looking after the Shed's money. They need to have an overview of the Shed's financial situation and provide information to help the group make informed decisions. The duties of the Treasurer can depend on the size of the Shed. In a large organisation with paid staff who undertake the day-to-day finance work, the Treasurer has more of a planning and authorising role. In a smaller organisation, as is the set-up of most Sheds, the Treasurer is responsible for two main areas:

- 1. Keeping financial records for the group** - The most important thing is to write everything down, and to keep all connected paperwork. Don't put off the task of recording money that has been received and spent until it becomes confusing and complicated. Do it straight away!

Here is quick checklist of the main tasks:

- Keep an up to date written record of the money going in and out of the group funds – often through a petty cash book
 - Keep receipts for all items bought.
 - Keep paperwork for all grants and money received.
 - Have a system for dealing with expenses and petty cash and authorise purchases (as two of three signatories)
 - Be the point of contact for the Shed's bank account
 - Check and keep bank statements.
- 2. Keeping the Management Committee informed** - It is the Treasurer's job to keep the committee informed about the Shed's money, so everyone understands the overall financial situation. It's useful to give a financial update at every committee and general meeting. This doesn't have to be a big task and a verbal update is often sufficient. It's useful for your update to cover:
 - How much money the group has.
 - How much has been spent since the last meeting, and what on.
 - Any problems or issues you have spotted – for example, if there isn't enough money to pay the room hire for the Shed for the next year.

At the Annual General Meeting the Treasurer will need to provide a fuller report that covers the whole year and produce a statement of the accounts that shows all of the income and expenditure. This has to be presented to the committee and agreed as an accurate record of the previous year's financial activity.

It is important to remember that the Treasurer does not have sole responsibility for the Shed's finances. It is up to the committee as a whole to decide how funds will be raised and spent. It's also up to the committee to make sure that the Shed's money is being handled properly.