

# How to run a community building for small community groups in Southampton



This checklist has been produced for use by community groups in Southampton who are running a community building which provides facilities for the wider community. In it you will find a basic checklist of functions and actions which should be carried out, to protect users and volunteers.

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## Introduction

Managing a community building is potentially one of the most rewarding and challenging as well as the most demanding and responsible tasks to face a community organisation. The responsibilities are similar, whether the building is a community centre leased from the local authority, a church hall, or scout building with community use.

People on Management Committees of such buildings acquire many skills and much knowledge and information concerning its management, and there is a danger of such useful skills and knowledge being wasted or dissipated as the membership of the Management Committee changes: new people need to go through the same process and those who advise or support the Management Committee have to remember to make sure that new people have the chance to 'learn the ropes'.

It is suggested that shortly after a new Management Committee takes over responsibility for a building and after each annual general meeting, the full Management Committee spends a session going through and discussing this checklist.

For Community Associations, a major point to bear in mind concerns the basic aims of the organisation. That is, the need to serve the interests of the community: Management Committees can get so weighed down by the duties and responsibilities of managing and maintaining the building, that they can easily forget that they have two aims – work for the benefit of their community, as well as managing a building.

Some items may not be relevant to your building or your building may have some unique features not covered by this checklist. So please ensure that over and above the advice provided here that your organisation creates its own list to suit both your circumstances and your building.

In an attempt to keep the information in this checklist current we have included links to external websites where possible.

## Terms of Occupation

Under what 'terms' do you occupy the building?

Does your organisation own the building outright or perhaps there is a lease or another type of 'occupancy agreement' e.g. Tenancy at Will. If you don't own the building you are 'a tenant'.

If you are a tenant then you need to make sure you understand the terms under which you occupy the building.

- What type of agreement do you have?
- How long is the agreement for?
- Who signed the agreement?
- Do you have Security of Tenure?
- Do you have to pay rent? If so how much and when?
- Are you responsible for insuring the building?
- What are your responsibilities in respect of repairs and maintenance?
- What are your responsibilities in respect of health and safety?
- Are there any restrictions on what you can do in the building? i.e. Check the 'permitted use' in your occupancy agreement and check other clauses for things like restrictions on closing times, types of organisations you can hire the building to, consumption of alcohol etc.

If you have queries about your occupancy agreement contact your landlord to discuss them in the first instance. However if you are in dispute with your landlord or want to make changes to your agreement it is best to seek independent legal advice.

If your organisation owns the building outright your organisation is responsible for all of the above.

## Legal Status of your Organisation

Depending on the legal status of your organisation, who has signed your lease (or other occupancy agreement) might be different.

For more information about the various 'legal forms' see the [Charity Commission](#) and [NCVO](#)

If your organisation has no legal status your lease may have been signed by Holding Trustees and then invested in [The Official Custodian](#)

## Lease with Security of Tenure

If you occupy your building under a lease it may or may not have Security of Tenure. Security of Tenure is when the lease is NOT opted out of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954. This means that at the end of the lease term the tenant can request a new lease from their landlord under the same terms.

**NB:** There are numerous conditions surrounding this so you would be wise to 1. Speak to your landlord and/or 2. Seek independent legal advice if your lease is about to expire and your organisation wants to stay in the building. Ideally start negotiations at least 12 months before your current lease expires.

## Your Organisations Structure

The structure of your organisation will vary depending on its Legal Status, see above. The majority of Charities have 'Trustees' and information about what this means in practice can be found in this useful booklet [The Essential Trustee](#)

## Licences and Legislation

Following a review in 2015, the majority of Community Buildings don't require a Premises/Entertainment Licence but you need to check if any of the activities held in your building require you to have a specific licence e.g. for the sale/consumption of alcohol or if you are holding a special event.

For more information about Licencing please see the [Gov.UK Website](#)

## Health and Safety

Is your building safe for people to use?

It is very important that your organisation understands its responsibilities for Health and Safety.

If your organisation owns the building it will be responsible for **all** health/safety and compliance, tests and checks.

If you are a tenant check your occupancy agreement to see what your organisation is responsible for and what, if anything, your landlord is responsible for.

If your organisation is managing/running the building on a day to day basis it is your responsibility to make sure it is safe for people to use. There are a number of Statutory Compliance Tests needed, from making sure the fire alarm works to checking the quality of the water, these tests must be carried out by a Competent Person/Contractor. To help find contractors look on [check-a-trade](#)

There are also Responsible Person Checks which can be carried out by a nominated member of your organisation as long as they are done on a regular basis, defects are reported/resolved and records are kept.

More information on the above tests/checks and a check list can be found on [Health and Safety Executive](#)

**NB:** Not all the tests may be relevant to your building or there may be other checks you need to do which are not listed so you will need to review and amend it to suit your building.

Best practice is for all plug in appliances e.g. kettle, microwave, over a year old, to be Portable Appliance Tested by a suitably qualified person on an annual basis. This should also apply to any items your user groups bring in themselves and use in the building.

It is also prudent to regularly do a visual check of 'plug in' appliances to make sure they are in safe working order e.g. is the plug secure, is the electrical flex okay i.e. not frayed or split etc.

If you or an organisation who hires the building is supplying food to the public you will need to make sure a Food Hygiene certificate is in place. Food Hygiene training is available from a number of organisations.

## Fire Safety

If your building has a fire alarm is it monitored? If so you need to speak to the monitoring company to find out what procedure they will follow should the fire alarm be activated. Usually they will try to contact someone at the building before calling the fire service so they will need a list of contact names and numbers. However you need to agree with them the best procedure to suit your circumstances.

If you have a fire alarm but it is not monitored you will need to agree with the groups that hire your building what they should do if the alarm is activated. To do this you need to create a Fire Evacuation Plan and a Hirers Fire Safety Agreement.

You need to make sure that 'Fire Action Signs' are in place and up to date. These include those on Fire Exits (often Push Bar to Open), Fire Doors (Fire Door Keep Shut, Fire Door Keep Locked etc.) and Escape Route signs.

The maintenance of any Emergency Lights should be covered in your Compliance Tests and Responsible Person Checks, see Health and Safety above.

Each group that uses your building must be given a copy of your Hirers Fire Safety Agreement (including 'one off' bookings) and those groups that use the building on a regular/long term basis need to carry out a fire drill (evacuation) on an annual basis. The date/time of the fire drill needs to be recorded together with details of how long it took for everyone to leave the building (can this be improved?) any problems or issues that occurred and the steps taken to resolve these.

The building will also need a Fire Risk Assessment every 5 years which is then reviewed every year.

There are a number of templates available on-line to help you with these items and you can also seek further advice from [Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service](#).

## Security

Is the building adequately protected?

A list of how many sets of keys there are and who has them needs to be kept  
What happens if a set of keys are lost or not returned?  
Do you charge groups a deposit to cover the replacement of keys and/or locks?

If your building has an Intruder Alarm is it monitored? If so you need to speak to the monitoring company to find out what procedure they will follow should the alarm be activated. Usually they will try to contact someone at the building before sending a security officer to check the building so they will need a list of contact names and numbers. However you need to agree with them the best procedure to suit your circumstances.

If you have CCTV is the system maintained on an annual basis?  
Is the 'recording equipment' kept locked away in a safe place so that it can only be viewed by authorised people. The legalisation around CCTV usage can be found [here](#).

## Insurance

Who is responsible for insuring the building?

If your organisation owns the building you will be responsible for insuring it.

If you are a tenant you will need to check your lease to see who is responsible for insuring the building. On some occasions your landlord will insure the building and they might charge you the cost of the premium, again this will be detailed in your lease.

It is usual for the tenant to be responsible for insuring the contents of the building.

You will also need Public Liability Insurance and if you employ people Employers Liability Insurance.

All User Groups need to be insured, this should be stated on your hiring agreement, to cover their activities and the people who attend them.

## Maintenance and Cleaning

Whose responsibility is it to clean the building?

Should you employ a cleaner?

What are the responsibilities of the user groups? Are their responsibilities listed in your hiring agreement?

How is rubbish collected from the building?

Do you have/need provisions for the disposal of nappies and/or sanitary products?

Who does all the 'odd jobs' e.g. replacing light bulbs, maintaining the garden etc.

## Inventory and Storage

What equipment does your organisation keep in the building?

Do you have an inventory? Is it kept up to date?

Is there a process for checking that items are in good working order?

If the items are used by other groups how do they notify you of any breakages/issues with equipment?

Who pays for repairs, maintenance or replacement?

What are the groups that use your building storing there?

Is storage being utilised to its best or have some areas become 'dumping grounds' for obsolete items? You need to carry out an annual review of storage and make sure groups are responsible for removing items (especially bulky items) that they no longer use. You also need to make sure that there is not a build-up of combustible materials in the building as this can be a fire risk.

## Bookings

Is there a person appointed to take bookings? Are there hire forms and conditions of hire that are up to date? Do people know how to contact the bookings Officer?

## Fair to All

Have you got an Equal Opportunity Policy? Is your centre Disability Discrimination Act compliant?

## Useful Websites

[The National Council for Voluntary Organisations \(NCVO\)](#)

[Charity Commission](#)

[Southampton Voluntary Service \(SVS\)](#)

[Training for Work in Communities \(TWICS\)](#)