

The management committee of a voluntary organisation which employs staff has particular legal and practical responsibilities.

In a smaller or newly formed organisation the voluntary management committee may be directly involved in the frontline work of the organisation as well as the governing of it. If a voluntary organisation employs staff, the staff should handle the day-to-day work of the organisation. The voluntary management committee has responsibility for the overall governance and direction of the organisation.

It is important to take time to be clear about the separate roles and responsibilities of the voluntary management committee and staff. There should be clear policies and systems for staff to be able to report back decisions and activities to the voluntary management committee. The relationship between the management committee and staff should be a partnership. The legal liabilities of each should be explained to the persons concerned.

The voluntary management committee has specific responsibilities in relation to the employment and management of staff.

In practice, and for the most effective running of the organisation, most tasks will be delegated to staff. Staff should also have some decision-making delegated to them. However, there needs to be clarity on which decisions are made by staff and which need to be made by the voluntary management committee e.g. the limit of expenditure which staff can handle. It is helpful to have policies and procedures on delegation of decision-making and tasks and to have clear procedures for staff accountability to management. It is necessary to have systems for staff to report back to management on an ongoing basis and also how to get in touch when decisions need to be made urgently.

Problems in the relationship between the management committee and staff can arise even in well run organisations. It is the responsibility and right of anyone involved in either the management committee or staff team to draw attention to problems in the relationship between the two groups. These should be addressed honestly and openly. Agreed strategies and policies for raising these issues can be helpful.

It is important to remember at all times that staff and volunteers are accountable for their actions to the voluntary management committee. The voluntary management committee is ultimately responsible for ensuring the organisation fulfils its legal obligations and operates efficiently and in line with good practice guidelines.

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