



...Our Advocacy Service

Rules of the organisation

July 2006

Contents

1. Introduction, Groups and Members
2. Trustees, the Trust Board and the AGM
3. Employees, Funding and Administration
4. Policies and Procedures

1 Introduction

- United Voices is a charity and a limited company
- Every year we have to send a report on what we have done to the Charity Commission
- Every year we have to send our accounts to Companies House and the Charity Commission
- We have several local groups from East Berkshire under an 'umbrella' organisation.

Local Groups

- Any group of people with learning disabilities in East Berkshire may apply to be a member of United Voices
- Each group must have its own rules and elect or appoint representatives to the United Voices Trust Board
- The Trust Board will decide to admit each group. This is a big decision.

Umbrella Group

- The umbrella part consists of the Trust Board and the people who provide management and administration services to all the local groups.

Members

- Any person who is a member of the one of the local groups, is automatically a member of United Voices
- People from the learning disability community receiving services from Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead and Bracknell Forest may join United Voices without belonging to the local group
- People from the learning disability community living in East Berkshire may join United Voices without belonging to any local group

- Volunteers registered with any group in United Voices are also members of the charity but are known as Volunteers not Members
- Each local group is a 'group member'.

What do the members do

- Members are entitled to attend all general meetings and to vote on resolutions at these meetings
- Representatives of the 'group members' sit on the Trust Board
- Members run the local groups.

Fees and Registration

- There are no membership fees
- Names and contact details of members are maintained by each local group
- Names and contact details of volunteers and members who do not belong to a local group are kept in a register in the office.

2 Trustees, the Trust Board and the AGM

- The trustees are the committee who are appointed by members to manage United Voices
- There are two kinds of trustees
- Representative Trustees are selected by each local group to represent their views
- Each local group may send 1 to 4 representatives to Trust Board meetings
- Foundation Trustees are volunteers
- The directors of the company will all be Foundation Trustees
- Each Foundation Trustee has 1 vote at Trust Board meetings
- A Foundation Trustee will act as company secretary

- Representative Trustees are appointed for 1 year
- Foundation Trustees are appointed for 3 years
- Trustees are appointed at the Annual General Meeting
- Trustees may be co-opted to the Trust Board until the next Annual General Meeting
- Trustees can not do any paid work for United Voices but their expenses can be paid.

Responsibilities of all Trustees

- Setting out the plan to achieve United Voices' vision
- Obtaining funds to make the plan happen
- Spending money wisely
- Reporting progress to
 - The membership
 - People who gave us funds
 - Charity Commission
- Making sure we obey the laws for charities and companies
- Employing employees and providing an office and equipment.

Foundation Trustees will also

- Supervise employees
- Ensure that local groups have sufficient support from employees and volunteers
- Sign official documents e.g. at least 1 Foundation Trustee must sign cheques
- Ensure that United Voices conforms to company law.

Representative Trustees will also

- Ask their local group what things they want the board to consider
- Tell their local group what happened at the Trust Board meetings.

How do the Trustees work ?

- All important decisions are made at Trust Board meetings which take place every two months
- There must be at least 2 Foundation and at least 3 Representative Trustees present to hold a meeting
- The Representative Trustees will speak for their local group
- A Representative Trustee and a Foundation Trustee will co-chair the Trust Board meetings
- The co-chairs will rotate so all trustees get the opportunity to co-chair the meeting
- The secretary to the Trust Board will keep minutes of all meetings
- The Foundation Trustees will meet together regularly to discuss and review proposals to be put to the full board for agreement
- These meetings of Foundation Trustees will be minuted.

The Annual general Meeting - AGM

- The purpose of this meeting is to tell people about the work done last year and to explain how much money came in to United Voices and how we spent it
- It takes place every year, usually in September
- The Trust Board sends out invitations to all members, volunteers, funders and other interested people
- The members present the annual report and the company secretary gives the finance report
- The members of the Trust Board for the next year are agreed by a vote
- Members can propose resolutions for the AGM but some changes can only be made by the Trust Board (see below)

Rules for making decisions in United Voices

- At Trust Board meetings decisions will usually be made by agreement
- Sometimes there may be a vote by showing hands
- If there are equal numbers of votes for and against, then there is no change
- Some big decisions can only be made if a majority of the Representative Trustees and a majority of the Foundation Trustees present agree. These are decisions which affect
 - the rules of United Voices
 - applications for funding
 - substantial issues on the employment of employees
 - disbursement of money
 - adding another local group
- If a decision cannot be made at a regular board meeting because the right people are not there then a special meeting may be called.

3 Employees, Funding and Administration

Employees

- The Trust Board will employ a very small number of people to support the local groups in United Voices and to do the administration and accounts
- They may be full-time or part-time
- The numbers will depend on the planned projects and getting funds to pay them
- Employees may not become trustees but may be invited to attend Trust Board meetings.

Funding

- Most of the funds for United Voices will come from bids made by the local groups to do particular projects

- A management and administration section will be included in the bid
- Funders will usually monitor performance and may require United Voices to enter into a contract with a Service Level Agreement.
- Some funds will be raised by the efforts of members and their friends - raffles, craft sales, donations, sponsorship etc.
- United Voices does not raise funds from the general public.

Administration

- Most administration is part of the project work and will be done by members, employees and volunteers as necessary
- The umbrella part of United Voices has an office where the administration relating to finance, employment, insurance, annual reports, the trust board and anything necessary to run a small charitable company is done
- The records are kept in the office
- The office is also used by the local groups for their work.

4 Policies and Procedures

- We have written down how we work in the Policies book which is kept in the office
- These policies and procedures apply to the Trust Board, to Members and to Employees and to Volunteers.