



Committee roles and responsibilities

Committee structure

The key elements of the structure of the association are the:

- constitution (governing document)
- members
- committee
- trustees

Constitution

All associations need a constitution. This is a document which establishes the fundamental rules by which the association is governed and describes:

- the aims of the association and its powers
- its membership
- the size of the committee and how members are elected
- the need for an annual audit and general meeting

It is good practice to adopt a constitution at the outset or as soon as you are aware that your association does not have one. PTA-UK has produced a model constitution for its members in England and Wales which has been accepted by the Charity Commission for England and Wales; we have also produced a version for our members in Northern Ireland, which is recognised by HMRC (Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs) Charities Division.

Members

The type of association your school has or wishes to establish will depend on its membership:

1. in a Parents' Association (PA) members are limited to parents, carers and guardians of pupils currently at the school
2. in a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) or Home School Association (HSA) members are limited to the above plus the teaching and non-teaching staff currently employed by the school
3. in any other association, such as a Friends or Community Association (CA), the members may be those described in 1 and 2 above plus any persons wishing to offer appropriate support or help to the school / association who is deemed suitable as a member by the Committee e.g. grandparents, members of the local community

It is important that the definition of membership is clear in your constitution. Members are not legally responsible for the actions of the association. It is the elected committee members who are legally responsible for the management of the association.

Committee

A committee is a team of volunteers who are elected at the association's Annual General Meeting (AGM) to manage the association on behalf of the members. There are two types of committee member, Officer and Ordinary (or Other) member. Officers have specific roles such as Chair, Treasurer or Secretary. Ordinary Committee Members play a vital role working alongside and supporting the Officers.

All committee members have equal voting rights, with the exception of the Chair, who has an additional casting vote, should this be needed.

It is normal for the size of the committee to vary, depending on the size of the school. The minimum number with which it is possible to operate is two; usually a Chair and a Treasurer. There is no restriction on the maximum number of committee members. However, it is in the association's interest not to make a committee too large, as this may prove to be unmanageable.

Additional support

In addition to the elected committee, it is valuable to have a list of volunteers/helpers, who are willing to support the work of the committee. It would be acceptable for such volunteers to attend committee meetings but they would not have a vote; only elected committee members (Ordinary and Officers) can vote. Being a nominated PTA volunteer can be a gentle introduction to the committee and such volunteers may well go on to being a fully elected committee member with full voting rights.

Trustees

If your association is a registered charity all the elected committee members (Officers and Ordinary) automatically become Trustees of the association (charity) and have a legal duty to ensure that the association (charity) acts lawfully and is managed properly.

Whilst Trustees have a legal duty it is important to remember that all decisions should be made collectively by the committee. No one individual should take sole responsibility for a committee decision or activity.

If your association is in England or Wales you can contact the Charity Commission to check if your association is already a registered charity. If your PTA is in Northern Ireland, you can check your charitable status with the HMRC (HM Revenue & Customs) Charities Division.

Fast track charity registration is available to PTA-UK members (England and Wales) who have adopted the PTA-UK Model Constitution. The Charity Commission expect that all committee members will have been subject to a recent Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check.

PTA-UK Information sheets

- Charity registration – England and Wales
- Charity registration – Northern Ireland
- Committee roles – chair
- Committee roles – secretary
- Committee roles – treasurer
- Good practice – committee meetings
- Good practice – general meetings
- PTA-UK model constitution – information
- Volunteer Checks – latest update

PTA-UK Resources

- PTA-UK model constitution – England and Wales (November 2011)
- PTA-UK model constitution – Northern Ireland

Useful contacts

- Charity Commission for England and Wales
www.charity-commission.gov.uk / 0845 300 0218

- HMRC Charities Division
www.hmrc.gov.uk / 0845 302 0203

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PTA-UK

This PTA information sheet aims to provide clear advice but should only be considered as a general guide. Further information sheets are available from www.pta.org.uk For more specific advice please contact info@pta.org.uk or 0845 850 5460. Parent Teacher Associations UK, a registered charity no 1072833, a company limited by guarantee and registered in England no 3680271.

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