



NCVO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Good employment practice case study

Setting up as an employer

We spoke to Bob Curry, partnerships manager for the North Yorkshire Forum for Voluntary Organisations (NYFVO). Bob described his team's work helping a small day centre to close and restart another organisation afresh with the right HR policies and processes in place.

How did this come about – what brought the issue to light?

NYFVO is working to reach smaller organisations in North Yorkshire.

- **NYFVO received an email from a local council for voluntary for service** who had identified a problem with a local playgroup which was on the verge of folding and requested NYFVO's help.
- **The playgroup's management committee had decided to wind up the charity.** The committee was a cluster of friends, some of whom did not properly understand their roles as trustees. Some members of the board had started to leave the organisation.
- **Redundancies needed to be made.** A second group arising from the first was also setting up on an informal basis and needed to know what was involved in running an organisation.

Who was involved in the support process?

Three advisors from NYFVO worked with the chair of the playgroup.

What did that involve?

- **Discussion by phone.** An advisor from NYFVO spoke with the chair of the playgroup.
- **Sending over contract templates and guidelines.** The playgroup needed to employ an individual to manage the day-to-day running of the organisation. Documents were sent to support this process.
- **Meetings with the chair.** An NYFVO advisor walked the chair through the implications of employing someone. This included who should do payroll and what was necessary for equal opportunities, health and safety, safeguarding and sick pay. Two meetings were completed.
- **Correspondence by email.** 11 separate communications were made over five months. *"A lot is done by email. We do have groups where trustees can only be contacted out of hours - and so we do this."*

What was the impact of these changes?

- **The organisation closed safely.** This avoided some common contingent issues including absenteeism and contractual disputes.
- **The new group began with appropriate HR policies and procedures in place.** These included equal opportunities and discipline and grievance.
- **A follow-up with the client is due 3-6 months after the work is completed.** The full impact of the support will be then be understood.

Is there anything that would have been done differently?

“There’s nothing really we would change about how we did the work. The first meeting was informal and then we made sure they wrote the policies themselves – as a kind of self-education. We helped them to grow in confidence. People do often try to frighten you but you can do a lot of stuff by yourself.”

“There’s masses of information on the web but it doesn’t take you through bit by bit. We break it down into English. With our templates, we explain what a contract is step by step with notes at the side. It’s almost taking people through.”

What next?

- **Guidance on fixed term contracts.** NYFVO is producing consolidated guidance to help groups understand the law and practicalities of working with staff on fixed term contracts.
- **Flexible training.** *“We’re changing our training to help smaller organisations. Often people can’t attend training because they work full-time. They don’t have the money to attend and they can’t leave the office so we’ve piloted workshops with local CVS’s aimed to be 1 ½ hours long with a £10 nominal charge.”* NYFVO will also provide training in the evenings and at weekends to maximise accessibility.
- **An employment conference.** NYFVO is running a conference in partnership with the Pay and Employment Rights Service and South Yorkshire HR Services in December 2010. This is priced affordably to encourage small organisations to attend.

What advice would you give to small organisations looking to set up as an employer?

“There are some key areas that new employers should consider – especially sports groups: these are terms and conditions, health and safety, disciplinary and grievance policies. Depending on the funding, there’s the equality and diversity policy, data protection/confidentiality policy and safeguarding policy. Then there’s a more advanced level of health and safety procedures. There may be other policies depending on the organisation in question - such as performance management, development and capability.”

Bob recognised that the support required when starting up can be quite intensive.

“Sometimes we can’t do face to face. But with new organisations and trustees, we go. It might mean you spend a disproportionate amount of time with one group but they’re small and there’s often an identifiable solution.”