

Where to go for Legal Advice

Introduction

There are numerous ways in which setting up and running a voluntary organisations interfaces with the law: from incorporation, charity law through to employment law, data protection, equalities, tax law and contracting.

Community Action: MK are unable to give legal advice, however we can signpost you to a range of organisations that may be able to help.

The NCVO [Knowhow Nonprofit](#) site has lots of information relating to specialist sources of legal information. For more complex matters, specific legal advice and assistance might be needed.

Denton's and Community Action: MK Legal Clinic

In association with Dentons Solicitors Community Action: MK runs a monthly legal clinic for voluntary and community organisations in need of legal advice. In the first year of its operation, the clinic provided more than 150 hours of free legal advice to community groups in Milton Keynes, earning a place on LawWorks' shortlist for its pro bono award.

Generally groups are able to access one free session to advise them on a matter relating to:

- Contracts and agreements
- Legal structures
- Property
- Employment
- Planning and litigation

NB: NOT CHARITY LAW

To qualify for advice, a group must be run by a voluntary management committee and have an annual income not exceeding £500,000 per annum.

The Clinic will not give advice to certain types of organisations, namely:

- residents' association's
- animal welfare organisations
- organisations whose primary object or purpose is the promotion of religion
- organisations whose primary object, purpose or activity is campaigning or lobbying
- international organisations whose primary focus is on benefiting communities overseas (unless they also benefit communities in the UK)
- private leisure and sports clubs professional or
- trade associations

The process for securing an appointment at the legal clinic is:

1. Get in touch with us via support@communityactionmk.org and we will identify whether it is the kind of issue the legal clinic could support.

2. The next step is we send you an enquiry form to complete and provide any supporting information. Once collated, we send this to Dentons and they run conflict checks to ensure they can advise on a particular problem.
3. Then we arrange the meeting, allowing enough time for the pro-bono solicitors to do the necessary research.
4. They then provide a one hour session for two people from the organisation and give you the opportunity to ask questions.

Other Sources of Legal Assistance

Hewitsons

Hewitsons are a local law firm based in Central Milton Keynes and they are able to offer charity law advice. They do not currently offer pro-bono services.

<https://www.hewitsons.com/office/milton-keynes>

LawWorks

LawWorks is a charity which connects people and groups needing legal advice with volunteer solicitors. In addition to legal advice, LawWorks for Community Groups gives free business law advice to charities, community groups and social enterprises in England and Wales. Again this is delivered by a network of volunteer lawyers. To use this service your organisation's annual income must be below £500,000.

The project can help with:

1. Corporate law advice – advice on contracts; how to incorporate the organisation as a company / Community Investment Company; updating and amending the organisation's Articles of Association and other constitutional documents.
2. Employment law advice – drafting, reviewing and updating employment contracts and staff handbooks.
3. Intellectual property law advice – advice on registering a trademark, and data protection issues.
4. Property law advice – advice on lease terms; assistance with negotiating tenancy agreements.
5. Other areas of advice include – charity law; tax and VAT; insolvency and help in drafting contingency plans; insurance law; health and safety law; general commercial matters.

<https://www.lawworks.org.uk/legal-advice-not-profits>

NCVO: Legal Advice

This webpage has a range of organisations and websites which groups can access for legal assistance and advice.

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support/information/legal-advice>

NCVO: Charity Law and Regulation

This factsheet covers basic information relating to the Charities Act, The Charity Commission, Public Benefit, Payment of Trustees and Campaigning and the Law.

https://www.ncvo.org.uk/images/documents/about_us/media-centre/ncvo_briefing_charity_law_and_regulation.pdf

The Law Society

<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/For-the-public/Getting-expert-help/Useful-organisations/>

The Charity Commission

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission>

Telephone: 03000 66 9197

Opening hours are Mon-Fri

10:00-12:00

13:00-15:00

Civil Mediation Service

This service provides members of the public and businesses with a simple low-cost method of resolving a wide range of civil disputes out of court.

<http://civilmediation.justice.gov.uk/>

This information sheet has been produced by Community Action: MK and was last updated in 2017. Community Action: MK has taken all reasonable precautions to ensure that information contained in this document is accurate, but stresses that the content is not intended to be legally comprehensive.

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