

Essential reading for village hall volunteers

An updated suite of seven essential documents for the volunteers who manage England's 10,000 village halls is now available from ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England).

The charity runs a national advice service for village halls, helping them to cut through red tape and stay on the right side of the law.

The service is delivered through the 38 county-based rural community councils who make up the ACRE Network and is supported by AON (UK) Limited. ACRE is grateful to Jonathan Dawson, Solicitor, for his input and support in producing the model documents.

Electronic copies of the seven documents, which help volunteers to ensure their halls are well-managed, are available from Network members. For a small charge, ACRE can [provide hard copies by post](#).

The documents are:

Transfer of Freehold Land and Trust Deed

Lease of Land and Trust Deed

Both of the above would be used by groups setting up a new hall charity, they are approved by the Charity Commission and groups registering a hall charity using one of these documents are likely to go through more smoothly and possibly quicker. They will become unincorporated trusts.

If a hall charity wants to become incorporated (i.e. a charitable company limited by guarantee) it can use the model **Articles of Association for a Village Hall**. It could choose to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and use Charity Commission approved **CIO Constitution**.

The **Hiring Agreement** should be used by all halls as it is the contract between the hall charity and the hirers of the hall. It safeguards both parties as it sets out what can and can't be done, what licences are held by the hall and how certain issues should be dealt with such as fire or accident.

The **Preliminary Declaration of Trust** can be used by groups fundraising to build a hall. It safeguards the funds and sets out what should be done, for instance, with the funds if the group doesn't reach their target and the hall is not built.

The **Occupational Licence** is for a hall charity to use if they want to let space for a year or so that is not used for charity purposes to another group for instance if a group want to set up a community shop, post office or nursery in an unused room. Using a Licence means that security of tenure of charity land and property is not being given to a commercial organisation.