



# **T3SC Factsheet**

## ***Managing a community building***

For many community groups, having your own premises is a great benefit to helping them operate and offer their service to their members. For other groups, having their own premises is a dream that they are working towards. However, together with the benefits of having a permanent base, there are also many other factors to be considered.

### **Finances**

- ♦ Operating from premises that you own or rent can be a considerable drain on your group's resources. Renting is often the cheaper short term option, but will commit you to finding a regular sum of money – do you have sufficient income to cover the rent plus other running costs such as utility bills for which you may be responsible.
- ♦ Buying your own premises clearly involves a large initial outlay, but does remove the need for finding regular rent. However, you will be responsible for regular maintenance, larger one-off repairs as well as utility bills.
- ♦ You may be able to obtain help from funders with either the purchase of a building or running costs. Not all funders are happy to fund buildings however, so do check their criteria carefully before applying.
- ♦ Funders will look very carefully at the sustainability of a project involving buildings. They will want to know how you plan to raise the money required to pay the bills beyond the life of their grant.
- ♦ Are you able to raise funds yourselves from charges to other groups for use of the building, do you plan to hold fundraising events?
- ♦ Funders will also need to see that a lease exists which guarantees a certain length of tenure or security.
- ♦ Community groups and registered charities may be able to obtain 100% relief on their liability for non-domestic rates. You will need to apply to the local council for this, Exchequer and Support Services, Business Rates Section, 0161 342 2045.

### **Legal issues**

- ♦ Owning or renting a building puts a burden of legal responsibility on a group.
- ♦ If leasing, be sure you have examined all the terms and conditions so that you are sure about what you are taking on – your lease will set out what you can and cannot do with the building, and what the lessor can or cannot do. Don't assume that the landlord will be responsible for all major repairs, there could well be a clause in the lease to say that YOU are!
- ♦ Service level agreements (SLAs) may exist between your group and the council or landlord. An SLA will set out what you are expected to do if you own or manage a building, and receive a subsidy to do so. They may exist in addition to your lease.

- ♦ Do you have a centre manager or a cleaner? Do you pay them a wage? If so, you may need to register with HMRC. You will also need to ensure you are keeping up with all the latest employment legislation, good practice, government directives and so on.
- ♦ If you are serving food on the premises, check you comply with the relevant Food Safety and Food Hygiene legislation.

## **Health and Safety**

- ♦ Management committees of community buildings have a duty of care to ensure that all reasonable steps have been taken to minimise any risk of injury to people using the building – whether or not they have permission to do so. To help protect against claims, committees will take out insurance – public liability insurance to cover liability to third parties, and employer's liability insurance to cover any damage caused by employees or volunteers of the organisation.
- ♦ Of particular concern regarding health and safety, is the proper supervision and management of fire risk. Again, the management committee is likely to be the body responsible for ensuring that the relevant regulations are complied with.
- ♦ This includes conducting fire risk assessments, and ensuring arrangements are in place and communicated to all concerned regarding what to do in the case of a fire being detected.

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