

Vale Centre for Voluntary Services (VCVS)

Your local county voluntary council



2. Running your organisation

2.15 Green policy

What is a Green Policy?

A Green Policy (also known as an Environmental Policy or Sustainability Policy) is a written statement that clearly indicates the position and values of your organisation on environmental and sustainability issues. It will include, or be accompanied by, an action plan that will contain:

- Measurable **objectives** that you hope to achieve
- **Action points** - the practical steps you will take to meet the objectives
- Identified **Indicators** that will be used to measure the success of the policy
- A time-table for **monitoring and review**.

Being sustainable involves a commitment to balance the economic, social and environmental impact of whatever we do.

Why have a Green Policy?

We all live in a world with finite resources and it is vital that we act in a sustainable way. In other words

'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' Bruntland Commission 1987.

The Welsh Government have a legal obligation to promote sustainable development in all it does (see www.wales.gov.uk/themessustainabledev/index.htm) Producing, and putting into action, a Green Policy not only demonstrates publicly that you as an organisation are taking your impact on the environment seriously but internally some measures could also save you money. Having a Green Policy in place may be a requirement for some funding bodies.

Reviewing current practice

Before developing a policy it is important to ask, 'Where is the organisation now?' and 'Where does it want to go?' Your organisation's existing policies and activities need to be audited for its present environmental impact. This will help to determine what needs to be covered by your policy and where improvements can be made. It is important that this review is done with the organisation as a whole so that you have support and understanding of everyone in working towards an effective Green Policy.

What should a Green Policy contain?

The policy is an agreed baseline and will be different for every organisation. It is not appropriate to adopt a policy off the shelf - the following notes provide a starting point for a discussion about what a policy and action plan might include. Every organisation can do something positive towards creating a healthier environment. Concentrating on something that can be done straight away, however small, is a good starting point. It makes an impact, creates confidence, and engenders support.

Remember -

Refuse : Reuse : Reduce : Recycle

Opening Statement

Your policy should start with a statement that acknowledges that your activities have an impact on the environment and demonstrates the commitment the organisation is making towards developing and putting into action a Green policy. For example:

<Name of Organisation> recognises that our work may have a direct or indirect effect on the local, regional and global environment. We are committed to reducing any harmful effects on the environment and promoting the understanding of sustainability in its broadest context.

You might find it helpful to think about the detail of your policy and action plan under different headings such as:

Waste reduction

It is most effective to minimise waste at source. Think about disposal of a product before you make a purchase.

Possible action points: Buy reusable, refillable or recyclable products; avoid using disposable items such as plastic plates, cutlery and cups; look for products made from recycled materials (purchasing recycled goods ensures the economic viability of recycling and helps create markets for collected materials).

Purchasing

All purchasing decisions should take account of the environmental factors involved in production, use and disposal of the product. Do you need to buy new? Could you borrow or share with another organisation?

Possible action points: Buy recycled and recyclable products; shop locally where possible; check if there is a fair trade option; buy eco-friendly cleaning products.

Energy and water saving

Energy production consumes valuable non-renewable resources and causes massive pollution.

Possible action points for energy efficiency: switch to green electricity suppliers; switch lights off wherever possible; use energy efficient light bulbs; use electrical equipment efficiently and ensure radiators have adjustable controls.

Possible action points for water efficiency: install water saving devices in toilet cisterns; regularly check for leaky taps, pipes and toilets and repair immediately.

Travel

Your environment policy could aim to reduce the impact of vehicle emissions by encouraging the application of sustainable principles to travelling and arranging meetings.

Possible action points: promote public transport, cycling or walking as the preferred form of transport for staff and volunteers; introduce extra allowances for those using alternative travel; car share where possible; use audio conferencing; work from home if appropriate.

Hygiene, health and safety

While conforming to legislation, all work places should acknowledge the worker's need for an acceptable working environment and should implement greener practices wherever possible.

Possible action points: Enforce a 'no smoking' policy; ensure adequate air circulation; invest in 'daylight' lighting.

For each section consider appropriate **policy, objective(s), action points** and **indicators**. For example:

Waste Reduction	
Policy	[Name of organisation] will reduce the amount of waste generated by reusing and recycling
Objective	To reduce waste generated by [name of organisation] by 10% by [target date]
Action points	Reduce consumption of materials; Reuse products where possible; Use refillable products where possible
Indicators	Amount of waste collected by the cleaners and recycling company Number of refuse bags purchased by [name of organisation]

Disclaimer

The information provided in this sheet is intended for guidance only. It is not a substitute for professional advice and we cannot accept any responsibility for loss occasioned as a result of any person acting or refraining from acting upon it.

For further information contact

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