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**CCVS** is a charity set up to support voluntary & community groups in Cambridge, South Cambridgeshire and Fenland.

**What we do:**

- Organisational Development
- Representation
- Networking

**Our services include:**

- One-to-one advice, guidance and information
- Fundraising support and help to identify funders
- Regular newsletter, e-bulletins and funding alerts
- Free training
- Work to get the sectors views heard and to raise its profile

**Membership**

Free to groups with an income of £5,000 or less or £20 or £50 per year for larger groups.

**Cambridge Council for Voluntary Service**

Charity no. 1074947  
 Ltd Company no. 3731848

# How to make your annual report a success

Writing your annual report can be a stressful experience but it can also be a great way to highlight your charity’s vision. It is also an excellent way of demonstrating your group’s credibility and impact as well as a useful tool for funding bids and marketing purposes. Annual reports are becoming increasingly creative and serve a much wider purpose than merely evaluating an organisation. Once you have decided the reasons why you’re creating an annual report you need to identify your key audience.

For many charities and voluntary associations your key audience may include:

- Donors and prospective donors
- Funders
- Volunteers
- Partners/Sponsors
- Members and prospective members

**Good Annual Reports:**

- State clearly the organisation’s mission and relate the activities back to the mission statement throughout the report
- Give a clear statement of performance objectives and targets and describe how they link to the mission.
- Disclose your organisation’s risks, issues and challenges in the context of the mission.
- Tell the reader how your organisation governs itself and how that governance structure reflects the mission of the statement
- Avoid committee reports in favour of one broad-based report that tells the organisation's story in a compelling and integrative way.

**Things to consider when writing the report:**

**Be selective** with the content—don’t overload with information but choose what you want to focus on and select statistics to represent that.

**Highlight key achievements** by using design, case studies about real people or quotes. Use **STAND OUT** text to summarise the page.

## Fact sheet 7

# How to make your annual report a success

## Resources.

The Guardian has a piece on good reporting

[www.guardian.co.uk/society/2001/feb/12/charities.voluntarysector](http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2001/feb/12/charities.voluntarysector)

Know How Non Profit have advice

[www.knowhownonprofit.org/campaigns/communications/effective-communications-1/annual-reports](http://www.knowhownonprofit.org/campaigns/communications/effective-communications-1/annual-reports)

**Explore** low cost digital options and create a cheap, more engaging version that includes infographics, videos and animations to get the message across more effectively. Don't forget the impact of a hardcopy—they are important marketing tools and useful to take along to meetings. If your audience will be using smartphones/tablets to read the report then ensure you are concise with the material and use plenty of white space.

**Consider adopting a culture of reporting impact:** Digital reports and online tools can help improve the way your website reports your impact on an on-going basis. To be truly effective, charities need to monitor and evaluate their effectiveness continuously. Encouraging a culture of continuous service improvement is good for any organisation, particularly for small charities wishing to grow.

**Be transparent, open and honest:** The report is a space to voice achievements and celebrate successes, however if the organisation hasn't been able to achieve all it wanted to in the past year then be honest about it. Most stakeholders appreciate honesty and transparency, so long as lessons are learnt

**Finally,** before you start drafting next year's report, take some time to evaluate the last one. Ask a few stakeholders you know what they think of it and get their comments—after all they are the people whose lives our charities make a difference to.

## Contents of the Annual Report:

**Reference and Administrative details of the charity including:** Trustee Board Members, Honorary Officers, Chief Executive, Auditors, Charity Number, Company Registration Number, Bankers

**Overview of the Year** — This is usually written by the Chair of Trustees

**Objectives and Activities**—This links in with the mission of the organisation and the services it delivers.

**Accomplishments and Performance**— what the organisation has achieved throughout the year.

**Financial Review**—funds, income and expenditure, risk management, reserves policy.

**Auditor's Report**—financial statements and notes.

**Funders, partners, corporate and public sector members**—listing of those who have supported the organisation over the year.

**Volunteers**—mention the important work of the volunteers and the contribution they have made to your organisation.

## Induction training for Trustees

### Resources.

CCVS website :  
[www.cambridgecvs.org.uk](http://www.cambridgecvs.org.uk)

National Council for Voluntary Organisations  
[www.ncvo-vol.org.uk](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk)

Charity Commission for England and Wales  
[www.charity-commission.gov.uk](http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk)

### What's the most important part of an annual report?

The most important part of an annual report is the description of your :

- **Accomplishments**—your readers want to know what you did, but more importantly, they want to know why you did it. What were the results? Why did you spend your time and money the way you did? What difference did it make? Connect the everyday activities of your organisation to your mission statement. Don't assume that readers will automatically understand how your activities help you achieve your mission.

### What about the financial reporting?

If your organisation is a registered charity, the Annual Report must contain:

1. A review of the significant or main activities undertaken by the charity to further its charitable purposes for the public benefit.
2. A statement by the charity trustees as to whether they have complied with the duty in Section 4 of the Charities Act 2006 to have due regard to public benefit guidance published by the Commission.

The Charity Commission's requirements can be found on their [website](#)

### What needs to go in the financial section?

The financial section of an annual report should clearly explain where revenues come from and how they are spent. In addition to the information provided in traditional financial statements (abbreviated formats are fine in an annual report), it's also helpful to include pie charts, bar graphs, or other visuals that help readers see the big picture and understand financial trends. A short narrative description that is in plain English is also essential to put meaning behind all those numbers.

For associations and membership organisations the report needs to be member-centred and demonstrate member value. Members want to see the return on investment of their membership fees.

### For examples of inspiring annual reports take a look at these

[Chance UK](#) have a great annual report

The [NSPCC](#) have a fantastic online build-your-own annual report

[Knowhow's](#) impact report makes good use of punchy stats

[The Wallich](#) did a graphic novel style annual report

[www.guardian.co.uk/voluntary-sector-network/2011/jul/29/writing-best-annual-report-advice](http://www.guardian.co.uk/voluntary-sector-network/2011/jul/29/writing-best-annual-report-advice)

### Disclaimer

Every effort is made to ensure that the information provided in this document is accurate and up to date.

CCVS advises that organisations should seek professional advice where they feel they need to, and accepts no legal responsibility for any errors, omissions or misleading statements.