Principles and guidelines for opening a FAN Group
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The FAN Charity

We want FAN Groups in villages and towns of every country so that any newcomer can find the nearest group and be sure of meeting a friendly face.

The Trustees, FAN Administrators, Group Reps and FAN Development Group have taken care over our principles and information offered for those wanting to set up individual Groups. Please read the booklet carefully and encourage FAN attendees to read it. We hope it will help to assure the well-being and safety of your Group and attendees.

Important

It is important that individual Groups realise that they are independent and not branches of The FAN Charity. Individual Groups cannot use the Charity’s name or charity number. They may use the name FAN in their group name if running FAN Meetings as described by The FAN Charity.

Each Group submits its own name when requesting to be listed on our website. Each Group is responsible for day to day running of its affairs and is not the responsibility of The FAN Charity.

The FAN Charity gives information about the format used for a FAN Group meeting and can provide helpful literature. Groups wishing to run a according to the Charity’s principles and guidelines may ask to be listed. The Charity may advertise individual Groups in literature and on the website. The Charity reserves the right to remove from the list any Group not operating according to our principles and guidelines.

The FAN Charity
Registered Charity Number: 1117005
The Principles

1. The primary purpose of ‘The FAN Charity’ is to promote friendship and social cohesion amongst people of all backgrounds and beliefs.

2. The Charity is not allied to any religious or political organisation; we do not engage in any controversy; neither endorse nor oppose any cause or beliefs.

3. The Charity is not responsible for the day to day running of individual FAN Groups. They are independent organisations.

4. The Charity will list Groups willing to accept and follow our objects, principles and guidelines and who supply a named contact person.

5. The Charity provides information and a centralised system for listing individual FAN Meetings, venues and times. It offers ideas taken from the experience of others, in order to promote harmonious and orderly running of new groups.

6. These principles and suggested guidelines cannot cover all the aspects of running individual Groups. Each Group must take responsibility for the suitability of venue, donations, data protection, and safety of attendees. Every Group should be fully self-supporting, organising its affairs in a way consistent with good practice for Groups in the community.

7. The Charity expects individual Groups and attendees to avoid action that is contrary to these principles and may harm the reputation of the Charity and other FAN Groups. Our common welfare should come first.

8. No-one pays to come to a FAN Meeting but a Group may accept voluntary contributions to help with running costs.

9. A Group may invite someone to act as Group Representative and/or
be the named contact person. The Charity will keep this as a confidential record and destroy the information once the individual no longer needs/wishes to be listed.

10. The purpose of individual Groups as recognised by the FAN Charity is to run a regular FAN Meeting using the standard opening and closing statements and listening to each person in turn, as described in more detail in the guidelines.

The Objects of The FAN Charity

To promote religious and racial harmony by developing and strengthening good relations between individuals of all beliefs, races and cultures, thus fostering a spirit of kinship, mutual understanding and respect among the peoples of the world.

Guidelines for running a FAN Group

Although individual groups are independent of The FAN Charity and responsible for finding out about and running their own affairs - they may find the information offered here useful. Running your Group properly is a protection for the Group and its attendees.

The FAN Charity offers in these guidelines contributions from other Groups. The guidelines are to help new Groups to think about what they need to do to be successful. We can only offer general guidance and this is no substitute for situations where you may need expert advice on a specific matter. We cannot cover everything and if in doubt about best practice, individual Groups should seek advice from organisations that exist to support community groups - such as WCVA in Wales and NCVO in England which are independent third sector umbrella bodies that can give a lot of advice and guidance.
We wish to emphasize that individual Groups need to take particular care and comply with all relevant legal obligations if they allow children and vulnerable adults in their groups. If they have concerns they should seek advice.

The FAN Meetings

The meeting as developed by The FAN Charity has a simple but important structure. It is this meeting that makes people feel involved and want to return.

Meetings start on time and finish within one hour - or earlier. Many Groups insist success comes from keeping to time and to the style of FAN meetings as outlined on the website and in this booklet.

Individuals speak once only, except for the person starting a meeting who may close it by saying a few words, such as thanking those who contributed.

The meeting is structured to ensure that everyone has an equal chance to be heard without anyone talking, turning to conversation or asking questions. The time to talk to another about what they have said is after the meeting.

Each meeting starts with the formal opening. This is on the website to download and you can buy or make laminated copies. The person who starts reads the first line. Then each person in the group reads a line in turn - passing if they don’t wish to do so. Even people who have little English soon learn the opening and closing. The closing is short and usually read by the person who starts the meeting.

A different person starts the meeting each week when possible. Whoever starts talks about their week and a subject they choose. If there are newcomers most Groups find it helpful say a little about themselves.
Attendees listen in silence to each person. They do not talk to each other (or to the speaker) during the meeting as this might stop them from listening properly to the person whose turn it is to speak. Before or after the Meeting closes is the time to chat.

Other important matters Groups will need to consider

It is important for community groups to keep alert to health and safety matters. The Group may wish to consider insurance - particularly if they also undertake other activities.

Groups who wish to run according to our principles may request a hard copy of this booklet which includes experience and ideas of best practice, or they can download it from the website.

Most individual FAN Meetings are organised for adults.

Groups accepting individual children and vulnerable adults need to pay particular attention to their legal obligations and health and safety matters. They should take relevant advice about insurance and CRB checks.

It is in everyone’s interest that individual Groups make it CLEAR that children and vulnerable adults are the responsibility of their parents/carers at all times. Groups could display a notice stating this if there is not one in the venue already, but such a notice does not remove the Group’s responsibilities for providing a safe environment for the meeting. The notice can also remind people to take care of their personal belongings as the Group cannot be held responsible for loss.

People offering to help others with English should do this before or after the meeting in the same public place where the FAN Meeting is being held. There should always be at least one other person around too. We
must remember that the help with English is informal. It is not ‘a lesson’. At all times it is still about us helping each other in a spirit of friendship - not about being teacher and taught. This is important if a parent brings a child - as the parent needs to be alert to the child’s needs and cannot therefore concentrate undividedly on learning English.

Individual FAN Groups all say they emphasise making each person feel welcome. A smile as people come in is often quoted as ‘most important’. People like it if you have managed to remember their name or something they told you.

Attendees should take care about meeting others outside of the FAN meeting if they do not know them very well. The general advice is not to take risks, meet in a public place with someone else and let a friend know where you are going.

We have various A4 size posters about data protection, taking photographs, safety of children and vulnerable adults, etc which can all be downloaded from the website www.thefancharity.org.

Contact information

All groups should follow Data Protection law about personal information like phone numbers and addresses. If you want to keep a contact list to share which you store in an organised filing system or on a computer, you are required to get signed consent from each member.

Our recommendation is to keep it simple and personal. By all means have a visitor’s book, but only for names and comments - not contact details. FAN attendees have said they often share mobile phone numbers and e-mail addresses but many prefer not to share addresses or numbers until they know someone well.
Money

Most FAN Groups are informal but Groups are of course entitled to set up their own formal structure and constitution if they think this will help their development. Some individual FAN Groups have done this because they want to organise other activities that group attendees can enjoy. Further advice on setting up formally structured Groups can be obtained from WCVA or your local County or City Council.

Try to obtain a free meeting room. If your group does rent a room, it will need to find the money. The FAN Charity does not have resources to support individual groups.

Basics of handling money

1. If you are going to handle significant amounts, for example rent, you will need to set up a post office or bank account. Don’t mix your group’s collection money with personal money.

2. The sort of bank account an independent FAN Group might want is a “Treasurers account” or a “Clubs and Societies Account”. Think about what you will want! Not all accounts are equally useful.

3. Keep things orderly. Even for money on a small scale, write down what comes in and goes out and have someone initial it with you. Different Groups have found it is important that people can see that Group money is handled correctly and know what is happening to it.
Finally

Individual FAN attendees have suggested that those of us who meet together regularly in a spirit of friendship should be encouraged to see that the good running of the group is the responsibility of everyone. All Group attendees need to help with setting out the room and in seeing that the meeting place is left clean and tidy. It is a big help for the Group Rep if people are willing to take responsibility for different jobs. Have you offered to help? All regular attenders need to give a warm smile and welcome to newcomers. Showing we are pleased to meet whoever comes has been the best way for meetings to grow.
The **FAN** Charity

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5th Floor, 5/7 St Mary Street,
Cardiff CF10 1AT

Tel: (029) 2080 3293
Email: admin@thefancharity.org
Web: www.thefancharity.org

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The **FAN** Groups listing form and contact details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FAN Group Name</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Meeting Days/Times</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venue and Address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAN Start Date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Names and Addresses**

The **FAN** Charity will keep this information on a confidential database until it is no longer needed or we are asked to remove it.

- **Name of Group Representative**
- **Contact Telephone Number**
- **Email address**

Please provide names of another group member willing to support the group if the Group Representative is absent and who is willing to be the second contact person.

- **Named contact**
- **Contact Telephone Number**
Registered Charity No. 1117005

Does your venue have disabled access? Yes ☐ No ☐

I have read and agreed to The FAN Charity Principles and Guidelines ☐

**Objects of FAN Charity**

*To promote religious and racial harmony by developing and strengthening good relations between individuals of all beliefs, races and cultures thus fostering a spirit of kinship, mutual understanding and respect among the peoples of the world.*

**Starter Pack**

Please tick one of the following...

☐ I would be pleased to have a copy of your Starting a Group Pack which includes the information on this website about the objects, principles and guidelines and 6 laminated cards with the opening and closing of a FAN Meeting - for our group to use.

☐ I do not need the Starting a Group Pack as I have accessed all the information on the website and downloaded the opening and closing statement etc

Please contact the FAN administration staff if there are any changes to the details of the FAN Group as listed on the form

Signature

Date
Opening a FAN Meeting

We welcome you to this FAN Group.

The group is for people to meet in friendship whatever their background or religion.

We come to listen and talk about our daily lives and we hope you will find kindness here.

We think different countries make the world a more interesting and exciting place.

We look for the good in every person and country.

We do not gossip or criticise each other.

You do not have to speak.

We listen and do not advise you about your life.

Anyone friendly is welcome here.

Can we sit quietly for a moment or two to remember we want the people of the world to live in peace?

Today I am starting the meeting. My name is ..................
Closing the Meeting

We hope you enjoyed this meeting. Remember what you liked and please forgive and forget things you do not like.

We are all human and we sometimes make mistakes.

We’re glad you came. If you keep coming we think you will feel the world is a more friendly place.

We hope you take good feelings back to your homes and to everyone you meet.

Have a good week!
A FAN Group started in the Bay area of Cardiff, Wales, in 2003. Some ESOL students were asked by their teacher if they practised their English with neighbours. The teacher soon realised then that they did not know how to meet local people. Some were lonely and isolated. Later she thought of starting a FAN Group Meeting which would be a one hour listening group - as a way for friends and neighbours to meet. The adult students were enthusiastic when asked if they’d like to meet people from the local community.

FAN stands for Friends and Neighbours. A FAN with a map of the world was chosen as a logo for the FAN Charity - because the founders dreamed of seeing FAN Groups across the UK and the world - one great international family - linking hands in friendship.

Some like the idea that FAN also means Friends Across Nations. Who is my friend? Who is my neighbour? Being a good friend and neighbour starts with each one of us. At a FAN meeting friends and neighbours come together to listen to each other and feel more hopeful for the world.

Caz, who had worked for community policing, helped Gill find the first venue and they set up the early meetings. The founder members were Azeb, Grace, Gulalai, Jen, Margo, Rashida, Sylvia and Qanal who, with Gill and Caz, quickly ensured the growth and development of FAN. When the mixed groups for men and women started they were supported by Abid, Barrie, Bernard, Dave C, David D, Dave S, Gamal and Nazir. Since then numerous staunch and loyal attendees have helped to take the FAN Groups forward.

It became clear that there was a much larger need for these Groups than had been realised. Local people and long term residents often longed to meet in friendship and reach across all cultural divides. Soon the Groups were contacted by a variety of professional workers in community
development. They asked about how to set up a FAN Group.

It was realised that in order to keep growing steadily, the Groups would benefit from a simple but clearly stated set of written principles and guidelines. Importantly, the FAN Group meeting style allowed all attendees who wished to speak, to do so, in turn and without interruption. Listening without interrupting is an important factor in the success of FAN meetings and worth preserving. Conversation before and after the meetings is actively encouraged.

All individual Groups are independent of The FAN Charity. Independent FAN Groups have regular weekly meetings which last an hour. The meetings give anyone in the community an opportunity to meet others in a spirit of friendship.

Now FAN Group meetings take place regularly at different venues throughout Cardiff and more will open soon in other parts of Wales and the UK. There have already been many enquiries from the UK and abroad. This includes enquires from Italy, the Middle East, Pakistan and the USA.

The FAN Charity has been cited as an example of good practice by Welsh Assembly members with a special interest in social cohesion and ABNI (The Advisory Board for Naturalisation and Integration). Meanwhile, a part-time development officer, Amy Cuff has been appointed with a grant from Oxfam, Cymru. She had the task of helping us to spread information about FAN to those who may be interested in setting up FAN Meetings outside of Cardiff. She also helped us with the production of this booklet and other PR and networking developments.

People have already found that FAN Meetings have helped them greatly. They feel more optimistic and know lots of interesting people. Some people attend 3 or 4 meetings a week! Through different FAN Group meetings they have often found others who can be very helpful - and who can give them information about the neighbourhood and suggest links which could be useful.
For more information on this fairly new but fast-growing grass-roots organisation see the FAN Charity web-site which is regularly updated. See www.thefancharity.org Teachers and students of English can download from the website 4 FREE ‘Learn English with Stories’ books.

Anyone interested in starting a FAN Group or FAN Meeting in their organisation in the UK or in another country (as outlined here) is welcome to contact the FAN Charity via the website and we can list your group.

The FAN Charity
c/o Oxfam Cymru,
5/7 St. Mary’s Street,
Cardiff
CF10 1AT

Tel: 07880 630553 or 0300 200 1269
Secretary/Trustee Tel: 07989 041495

Email: admin@thefancharity.org
Web: www.thefancharity.org
The Named Contact / Group Representative

To be listed on our website a group needs to give The FAN Charity the name of someone willing to be the contact or Group Representative. The Group Rep and/or named contact is someone giving time and energy to helping the Group. Groups have found it a good idea for the job to be passed on to others in the Group every six months or year.

1. The Group Rep welcomes newcomers and explains how the meetings run.

2. The Group Rep can help a lot by reminding everyone it is important to start on time and that meetings should not be longer than an hour.

3. A Group Rep can help the person starting by reminding the others it is time to start and introducing the person starting the meeting. When necessary the Group Rep can remind everyone, that we all listen to each other and that we do not have a conversation or ask questions until the meeting has been closed.

4. The Group Rep can ask the first people to arrive, to help set out chairs, the opening and closing statements and a donation bag. It is a good idea to encourage everyone to share the responsibilities of the Group – collecting donations, making teas and clearing up etc.

5. The Group Rep can take care of donations and pay the rent or ask someone in the Group to act as treasurer. There are more suggestions for taking care of money in the section on ‘running a FAN Group’.

6. Group Reps say it is useful to keep a simple rota of people who are willing to start the meeting each week. People learning English find it very helpful if they know the subject in advance. Those who are going to start a meeting can be encouraged to write their subject
on the rota sheet. If they change their mind or turn up with a new subject on the day - that will be ok too.

7. There should never be pressure. FAN Group meetings are about respect and friendship. If someone cannot come or doesn’t turn up they will have their reasons - no-one wants to make anyone feel bad about it - a volunteer will usually take the meeting, or attendees can just talk about their week.

The Group Reps arrange for someone else to be there if they cannot. It is a good idea if there can be at least two people to meet others who may come.

Group Reps will be able to have a password to log in and change information on the website relevant to their group. This means they can tell people if the group is closed or about future events.

Individual Groups are completely independent of The FAN Charity and responsible for running themselves - they are not branches of the Charity.

The Group Rep can register online and receive a password which can be passed on when a new person takes on the job. The Group Rep can add and change information on their Group Web Space. We ask that you read the information about commonly accepted rules for writing on websites. We ask only for friendly and positive comments. Do not name individuals or put their photo’s online without their permission.
Membership

Membership is for those keen to give their time and skills to spread the idea of FAN Meetings to other areas. It is for people who would like to offer their time and skills to best develop a charitable organisation.

If you want to help by giving time to The FAN Charity when it is needed so that there are many more FAN Meetings across Wales, the UK or the World - please fill in the Membership form which you can find on the website and let us know how much time and what skills you may be able to offer!

Before becoming a FAN Charity member you should have attended at least 6 FAN Meetings.