

## Forming an FSA affiliated Local Group

### Quick Start-up Guide!

The Forest School Association (FSA) welcomes and would like to support members who wish to form local groups affiliated to the FSA. We believe that facilitating communication, networking and sharing of skills is fundamental for the Forest School community to support and develop its professional practice within the UK.

This document is designed as a summary for those members interested in forming local groups. We anticipate creating a more detailed guidance document to support this process in the near future.

#### **What does becoming an FSA Affiliated Local Group mean?**

Each local group is a distinct, autonomous, not-for-profit organisation with its own regional flavour, governance and style. The FSA has no desire to control the activities of the local groups but rather to facilitate the process of forming these groups and to act as an umbrella for these groups to unite under and work together through. We anticipate the arrangements to be a reciprocal relationship between the local groups and FSA to support and develop Forest School together.

The FSA recognises the importance of local support for the Forest School community and sees the work of the local groups as essential to its aim of promoting quality Forest School for all. The formal agreement between FSA and the local group outlines the expectations and responsibilities of both parties, so that all involved have a shared understanding and common goals.

Once a group and FSA mutually commit to the terms within this agreement the local group becomes officially 'affiliated' to FSA and can use its name, logo and branding. As such, the group becomes the local representatives of the FSA, hence the importance of the formal agreement.

#### **Benefits of becoming a FSA Local Group**

**Centralised Membership Administration** – all personal membership data is held by FSA, meaning local groups do not have to worry about data protection issues or time consuming database administration.

**Online Group Services** – the membership section of the FSA website has the facility for groups to be set up online. These services essentially provide local groups with the facilities to communicate with their members, promote events and share files. Please see section below about online services.

**Free Publicity and Promotion** – FSA will list local groups' events and activities for free within the FSA website, newsletters and associated social media. FSA will also provide local groups with an FSA local groups logo to use in publicity and social media.

**Half-Price Event Administration** – Groups have the option of using the FSA’s administration services to manage their events (taking bookings & payments etc) at half the normal price.

**A United National Voice** – the FSA will act as an umbrella organisation for its members at a national level, meaning that local group issues can be raised and be fed into the bigger picture of Forest School within the UK through their representative member.

**Insurance Cover for Emergent Groups** – the FSA is able to extend its public liability insurance policy to cover emergent local groups for their clerical and administrative activities. Please see section below for more information.

## **Becoming a FSA Local Group**

There could be two different situation when considering setting up a FSA local group:

1. An existing group or network would like to change from their current arrangements and become a FSA local group (such as ex-Forest Education Initiative groups or networks formerly supported by local authorities).
2. FSA members local to one another would like to form a new group as a FSA local group.

### **1. Changing an Existing Group**

This section is referring to existing groups who are formally constitutionalised with elected officers who manage the day to day running of the group. If the group is a more informal network without a constitution or elected officers, then the process will be much the same as forming a new group (please see separate section below). However, unlike a totally new group, the informal network will already have a list of potential members for the new FSA local group and possibly some methods of communication, which may make the set-up process easier.

FSA would encourage any group considering to change to become an FSA local groups to fully consult with its existing membership to ensure that it is the best route for your group. Many of these changes will also likely need to be agreed by a majority vote of your current membership, so may require an extraordinary general meeting to formalise them. We would encourage any group to ensure they follow their existing systems and codes to undertake these changes.

If the existing group has decided to make the change to become an FSA local group the following points may help you consider the actions that need to be taken:

- **Contact FSA** - to indicate your group’s interest in becoming a local group. FSA will provide your group with the terms of agreement and support you through creation of online group facilities.
- **Geographical Region** – you will need to decide the region your group will cover.
- **Change of Name** – amend your constitution, documents, bank account and insurance policy to be referred to as ‘FSA (and the local region you are planning to cover)’.

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- **Constitution** – amend your constitution/governing documentation to reflect appropriate aims and objectives which are in line with FSAs. Provide FSA with a copy of your constitution.
- **Membership to FSA** – encourage existing members of the group to join FSA so they can continue their membership with the group once it becomes an FSA group.
- **Formal Affiliation Agreement** – The group will need to agree to the terms within this document and the chair person will need to sign a copy of this. Once this agreement is made your group is formally an FSA local group.
- **Representative Member** – The group should nominate a member (ideally from the committee) to join the FSA working group for Local Groups. This member will represent their local group at a national level and act as communication channel between FSA and the local group.
- **Public Image/ Rebranding** – once formalised as a group you will need to ensure any websites, social media, email address, stationary etc reflect the group's new name and organisation. FSA will provide your group with a customised FSA Local Groups logo that can be used for this purpose.

## 2. Forming a New Group

This section refers to if there is currently no FSA group within your area and you would like to set one up. Before you undertake this process it may be worth checking whether there are any existing groups in your area who support Forest School (such as Forest Education Network groups, Local Authority Networks etc).

- **Contact FSA** - to indicate your interest in setting up a local group. FSA will support you through creation of online group facilities.
- **Geographical Region** – you will need to decide the region your group will cover.
- **Making contact with likeminded others** – the online group services can help you make contact with other FSA members in your area who may be interested in supporting the creation of a local group. You may be able to find other interested people via other means too.
- **Reach a minimum number** – once you have 9 FSA members who are in support of forming a local group within a particular region then re-contact FSA who will provide you will a copy of the terms of the affiliation agreement.
- **Formalise your group** – in order to meet the terms within the affiliation agreement you will need certain things in place such as:
  - Elected officers to form a steering group/committee – including as a minimum a Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary). You need to inform FSA as to who these officers are.

- An appropriate constitution – FSA can provide a template constitution to support immersing groups. You will need to send a copy of this document to FSA
- A bank account
- Appropriate insurance (please see section below)
- **Becoming Affiliated** – Once your group is ready you will need to agree to the terms within the Formal Agreement document and the chair person will need to sign a copy of this. Once this agreement is made your group is formally an FSA local group.
- **Representative Member** – The group should nominate a member (from the committee) to join the FSA working group for Local Groups. This member will represent their local group at a national level and act as a communication channel between FSA and the local group.
- **Public Image/ Branding** – once formalised as a group you will need to ensure any websites, social media, email address, stationary etc reflect the group’s name and organisation. FSA will provide your group with a customised FSA Local Groups logo that can be used for this purpose.

## **Insurance**

FSA recognises that insurance cover can be a potential barrier to groups who have limited funds. We have arranged to extend our Public Liability Insurance to cover emergent local groups to support them in their early stages of formation. This covers any clerical and administrative activities such as initial meetings before the official formation of the group. The cover does not extend to advisory activities such as training and skill sharing events or events that involve the wider general public (i.e. not FSA members). However, it may be possible to arrange additional cover for one-off events (such as fundraisers) that emergent local groups are organising for a small additional fee.

Once a local group is officially formed (with elected officers, constitution and affiliation agreement) then it becomes a separate organisation from the FSA and will be required to have its own separate insurance cover.

## **Contact the FSA about Local Groups**

The FSA board has a director with the portfolio for ‘Membership & Local Groups’ who is responsible for overseeing the local group’s developments. The development of the FSA affiliated local groups arrangements is steered by a working group, consisting of nominated members representing each local group and the FSA director for Local groups.

If you would like to contact them please contact the FSA office on [enquires@forestschoollassociation.org](mailto:enquires@forestschoollassociation.org) with the message clearly marked as ‘Local Groups’.