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⋮ How to set up an erosh regional network - a toolkit

We have designed this Toolkit to help you to set up your own regional or local network and share best practice.

Erosh welcomes networks of all sizes, regional and local, urban and rural. We currently have several networks operating around the UK and we aim to grow this number to take forward erosh's aims and objectives in the local area. With localism a fundamental approach of the Coalition Government, it is more important than ever that erosh members come together locally to disseminate information and share good practice.

If you would like to be involved in a network or help start one, please contact us so we can register your interest and help you with the organisation of your first meeting. Once you have established your network, please keep us up to date with your activities regularly so we can showcase your progress and achievements on our website. We can also promote your events through our monthly e-zine and post notes of meetings on our website

If you need any help or advice, please contact us on 01249 654249 or email at info@erosh.co.uk.

Best wishes and good luck!

Jo McTavish
Chair, Network Groups Sub Committee

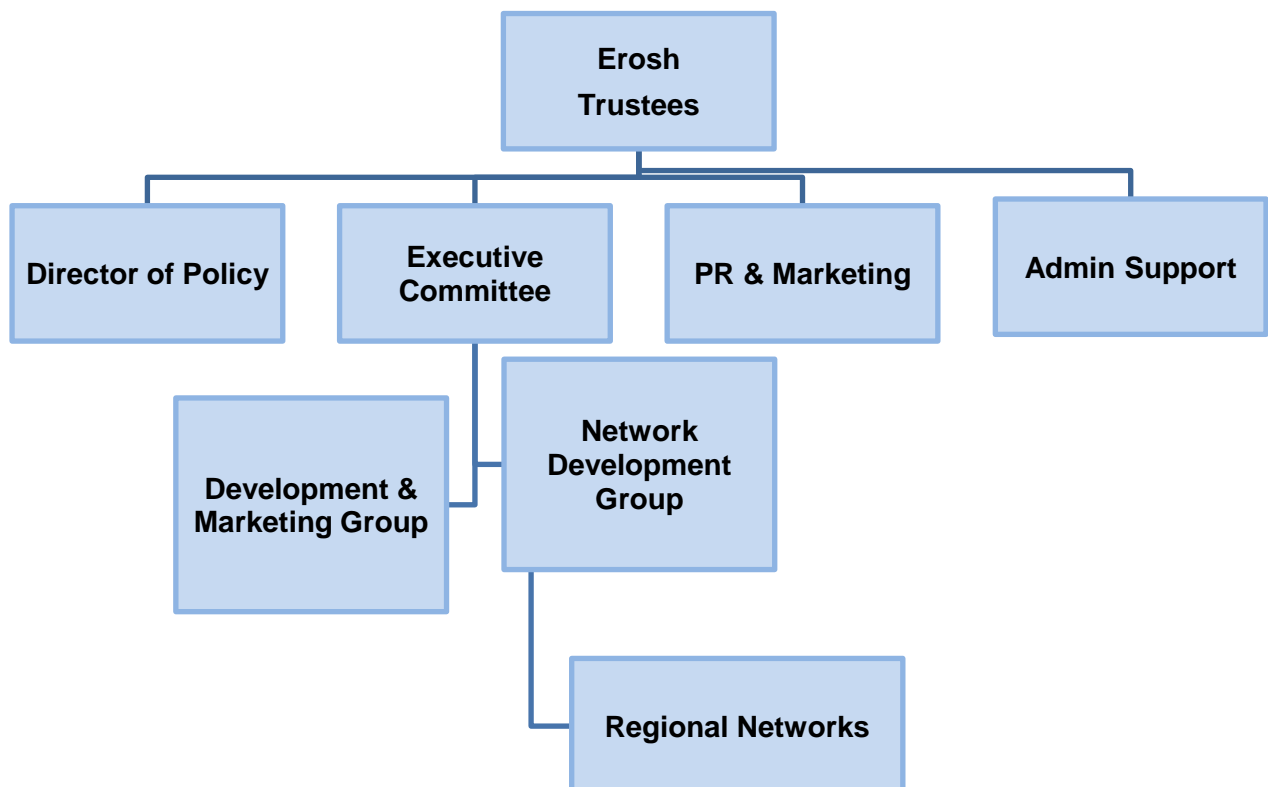
1. Structure of erosh

Erosh has an Executive Committee which reports into a Board of 16 Trustees. This committee is elected at our Annual General Meeting with representation of large and small housing associations, local authorities, and other key organisations such as the Chartered Institute of Housing, National Housing Federation, Age UK etc.

The Chair, currently Domini Gunn, Chartered Institute of Housing, oversees the Executive Committee and two operational groups which meet quarterly:

- *Development & Marketing*, chaired by Kevin Williamson (Westminster Council) and Althea Howarth (Ridgeway Associates)
- *Network Development Group*, chaired by Jo McTavish (Retired)

The diagram below illustrates the structure of erosh:



2. How regional networks operate

The ways in which networks operate vary from region to region depending on what works where. Some networks are more formal with a constitution, business meetings, minutes etc; others take the form of events or mini conferences with guest speakers. The style of the network is up to those who are involved and what works best depending on geographical spread, nature of organisations involved, chair etc. Networks also report back from Executive Committee meetings as well as feed in ideas and comments into these meetings.

All we ask is that you make sure you keep us updated about your meetings/events and any accompanying notes or presentations so we can post information on our website. Please send these (as well as any other information about your Network events) to Lucy Beaumont at lucy.beaumont@vu-tbq.com with copies to Jo McTavish who chairs the Network Development Group at jomctavish@aol.com

3. Tips for organising regional networks

- 1. Setting up a new Network:** You might wish to set up an “investigative” meeting to test the appetite for a network in your area. The Chair of the Network Development Group or another erosh Trustee will try to attend so it is useful if you can liaise with Jo McTavish jomctavish@aol.com when you are agreeing a date for your first meeting/event. You might also invite non-members/potential members (see 4. below) and encourage attendance by inviting a guest speaker (see 5. below). If this meeting is successful you can then move on to a launch meeting where we suggest you invite a much wider range of people. We can help you with the agenda for these meetings.
- 2. Location of meeting/events:** meetings/events tend to be held at provider organisation’s premises; in sheltered schemes, training rooms or head offices. Many organisations are willing to provide a venue free of charge, teas and coffees and sometimes lunch.
- 3. When to hold meetings/events:** again each network will operate differently to suit its own area/members. Some have found it useful to vary the day of the

meeting/event to avoid excluding members who are already committed on a particular day; some of found a half day meeting either in the morning (finishing with lunch) or in the afternoon (starting with lunch) so members are not committed for the whole day. Usual patterns tend to apply i.e. avoiding Mondays or Fridays, rush hour travelling etc.

4. **Membership:** a list of members and contact details in your area can be provided by Marie-Therese Atkinson, erosh Administrator info@shelteredhousing.org . Depending on the location of your meeting/event, you might wish to widen your distribution list to technically neighbouring regions. You might also wish to invite some non-members with a view to encouraging them to join erosh.
5. **Packs and registration forms:** Marie-Therese Atkinson, erosh administrator, info@shelteredhousing.org can help with providing packs for your events which include erosh publicity information and a registration form which all people attending the meeting/event for the first time need to complete as well as anyone whose contact details have changed. This helps us to keep our database up to date. You need to send any completed forms to Marie-Therese as soon as possible after the event.
6. **Speakers:** if you decide to run your networks as events rather than meetings, you may want to invite guest speakers. You could invite the hosting organisation to provide a speaker to showcase some good practice as well as inviting network members to suggest people willing to speak free of charge. Unfortunately erosh is unable to meet the cost of speakers' fees or travelling expenses.
7. **Publicity for your event:** Please send details of your meetings/events on a regular basis to Lucy Beaumont, lucy.beaumont@vu-tbq.com including date, venue and topics to be discussed etc so we can include the information in our monthly ezine to members. Copy for the ezine needs to be sent to Lucy by the beginning of the third week of each month.
8. **Formal meetings:** if you decide to run your regional network as a semi-formal/formal meeting, standard meeting arrangements would apply. If your network decides that it would like to have a formal agreement in place you may want to develop your own terms of reference and constitutional agreement. We have however provided a sample agreement (over leaf) for you to use if you prefer.

Erosh: Constitution for the _____ Network

Aims

- To establish a forum which enables the aims of erosh to be pursued at a local level
- To enable local members to influence the work of erosh nationally
- To promote and encourage membership of erosh
- To encourage partnership working with appropriate statutory agencies and other organisations

Membership

Membership is open to anyone working in, or having an interest in, sheltered and retirement housing for older people and related support services.

Equal Opportunities

Membership of the network is open as in (3) above, irrespective of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, marital status, disability, sexual orientation or religious belief.

Officers

There will be a minimum of three officers which will include a Chair and Secretary who will meet at least four times a year.

General Meetings

There will be a general meeting open to all members at least four times a year. An Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) open to all members will be held if at least 25% of members submit a written request to the Secretary. Notice of all General Meetings will be published at least 14 days in advance.

The Annual General Meeting

There shall be an Annual General Meeting (AGM) in _____ at which those attending will elect new officers and vote on any proposed amendments to the Constitution. Nominations for office should be received by the Secretary no later than 14 days before the AGM and notice of the AGM will be published at least 14 days in advance of the meeting.

Quorum

Meetings will not proceed unless there are at least 4 members present.

Voting

Voting on any issue shall be by show of hands

Changes to the Constitution

Changes to the Constitution may be made at the AGM or Extraordinary General Meeting. Any proposed changes to the constitution must be given to the Secretary in writing at least 14 days before the relevant meeting.

Dissolution

The Group may be dissolved at an Extraordinary General Meeting called for that purpose. The date must be advertised at least 14 days in advance. A proposal to dissolve the group shall only take effect if agreed by 50% of the members.

Erosh Network Case Study: Waltham Forest Regional Group

Cheryl Whittle, Vice Chair Waltham Forest Group

Waltham Forest erosh was founded to address specific local issues highlighted by providers but covers local, regional and national issues.

Aims of the Group

We aim to promote sheltered housing and increase awareness of the work of sheltered housing staff. We discuss national initiatives, Supporting People funding etc and share information and innovative practice. We also act as a consultative forum on older people and SP issues.

Benefits of the Group

The group comprises a range of scheme managers, middle managers and housing officers and members benefit from the wide range of knowledge and expertise in relation to older people.

Who we are

We have about 10 members drawn from local authorities, housing associations and care providers

What we discuss

Our meetings have a structure and an agenda, and we discuss issues such as:

- Changes to legislation and SP
- Service improvements
- Benefit changes and updates
- Policies and Procedures
- Specific topics ranging from health, care, welfare reform, safeguarding and business continuity procedures

Excellent outcomes

One example of our network's success is in relation to local authority nominations. Members were constantly expressing concerns regarding quality of local authority nominations which could be frustrating for both applicant and staff member when nominated accommodation was not suitable for the applicant's needs. Waltham Forest erosh members campaigned tirelessly to the local authority to allow a member of the group to sit on the local sheltered panel to see how it worked, have a valid input into the process and recommend changes to assist providers. This campaigning was successful and members still sit on the panel on a rotation basis. This experience has allowed us to see where the process is failing providers and we are currently advising on changes that need to be made.

Erosh Network Case Study: Northern Ireland Regional Group

Louise Roberts, Chair Northern Ireland Regional Group

The erosh regional group was founded in Northern Ireland in 2003 by a group of sheltered housing providers to address specific local issues.

Aims of the Group

As a group we meet every six weeks to discuss common issues and share good practice. We work with a range of local government bodies, voluntary organisations and the independent sector to promote the role of sheltered housing and the excellent support services provided to older people by our well trained, caring staff.

Benefits of the Group

I feel it is really beneficial being part of the erosh network in Northern Ireland. It provides the opportunity for like-minded people to come together at a local level, while at the same time knowing you have a national voice.

Who we are & what we discuss

In Northern Ireland we have about 15 members who manage sheltered housing across Northern Ireland.

We are a formal group – with Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer. We have an agenda and minutes are taken. At our meetings we discuss a range of issues affecting sheltered housing from Supporting People to sharing how we prepare for the winter weather! It is very useful to meet with other providers who have the same issues or who doing something well that you can learn from.

How we feed into other groups and the National Consortium

Within Northern Ireland our members are represented on other groups which Erosh can feed into. Nationally we have a link to erosh's Executive Committee through my role as one of the Trustees.