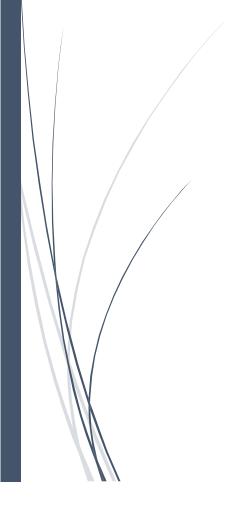


The Free Cakes For Kids Cookbook





Free Cakes For Kids August 2021



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Welcome to Free Cakes For Kids!

Free Cakes for Kids is a movement of local volunteers and community groups who share a simple belief: every child deserves a birthday cake. Since 2008, we have been baking for thousands of families who find it difficult to provide a birthday cake for their child. Our cakes are homemade, delicious and usually feature the child's favourite theme or style. We do this because we love baking and are passionate about our communities.

You are probably reading this Cookbook because you've heard about Free Cakes for Kids from a neighbour, in the media or on the internet. Now you're interested in learning more about the movement and how to be a part of it. This Cookbook will accompany you on your journey and help you do exactly that.

We hope this Cookbook will be useful to get you started and excited. Keep in mind, though, that there is no single recipe that works for everyone. In fact, one of your main challenges will be to adapt the idea to make it work in your community. Use this collection of ideas, insights and best practice on how to care for your community through cake. No matter if you're an avid home baker, a committed community organiser or simply a curious person who would like to find out more – you are in the right place.

Take care and good luck,

Directors of Free Cakes For Kids UK



In & Kate





A Brief History of Free Cakes For Kids

On a rainy day in December 2008, Henriette Lundgren read an article in People magazine about a new community initiative in the USA called Free Cakes for Kids. A lady in Georgia was baking birthday cakes for families in need. A passionate baker herself, Henriette saw an opportunity to adapt the model to her own community in Oxford.

After dozens of phone calls and countless conversations with neighbours, local charities and social services, Henriette found a willing band of volunteers and established Free Cakes for Kids Oxford. After putting up announcements in children centres, community halls and the local foodbank, the first ever Free Cakes For Kids birthday cake changed hands on 10 June 2009. After six months of hard work, this football-themed cake for a 6-year-old boy from Holloway was created.

Since then, the community group model has spread rapidly. More and more volunteers from all over the UK got in touch to start their own groups and activities. Overwhelmed by the number of inquiries and requests for support, Henriette established the Free Cakes For Kids UK network group in May 2012. This group would provide oversight of the network; give advice to local groups; and protect the brand. In January 2016, Henriette moved to the USA and thus Jon Dell and Kate Thorpe have taken on Director responsibilities ever since.

There is now a critical mass of volunteers all over the country that have mastered the craft of community organising. Established groups are in a unique position to mentor newcomers. Rather than relying on a small group of central organisers, we have grown into a movement. A movement everyone can join to make a difference – one cake at a time.





People magazine article that inspired Henriette



What is Free Cakes For Kids?

A Caring Community

A simple answer to "what is Free Cakes For Kids all about?" would be 'a caring community'. As volunteers with a passion for baking, we care for families who find it difficult to provide a birthday cake for their child. Baking in our own homes and kitchens, we believe that every child deserves a birthday cake. Using our skills as bakers, neighbours and good citizens, we build relationships, encourage volunteering and create memories that last longer than a day.

As a shared idea, the Free Cakes for Kids movement is open for anyone to join. All it takes is to find a family and bake a cake.

How does it work?

At the heart of every Free Cakes for Kids group are individual birthday cakes. Put simply, a Free Cakes for Kids group matches two groups: volunteer bakers and families in need.



What Free Cakes For Kids is not

By defining what Free Cakes For Kids is, it is important to explain what Free Cakes For Kids is not.

1. A Centralised Charity

Often, people think we are a centrally organised charity that could provide a cake for someone at the other end of the country. This is neither possible nor logistically desirable. Free Cakes for Kids is run by volunteers in their local communities who are best equipped to know and understand their communities.



Each Free Cakes for Kids volunteer and local group operates independently, based on our shared values as a movement. In order to protect the movement, we have established a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee (company registration no. 9375876). The main purpose of this entity is to safeguard our name and logo from commercial interests and maintain the basic website.

2. Part of Social Services

Sometimes people think that we deal with vulnerable children and hence form part of the social services provision for these children. In fact, we rarely see a birthday child. Our first point of contact are usually the families or partner organisations. The cakes are then handed over in a public place, such as a bus stop, community centre or supermarket. This is convenient and safe for both bakers and families.

3. A Commercial Enterprise

Every cake is baked by local volunteers. Bakers usually pay for the ingredients themselves and make the cakes in their home kitchens. Ingredients for a sponge cake with a jam filling and some icing decoration on top costs around £8. In short, Free Cakes for Kids works 100% as and with volunteers.

What difference does Free Cakes For Kids make?

What difference can a cake make? Couldn't people simply buy their own cake at the local supermarket? Why give children even more "sweet stuff"? Shouldn't they eat something healthy? And why not teach people to bake themselves?

These are good and simple questions, but the answers are more complicated. The families we work with find it difficult to provide a birthday cake for many different reasons. Some are in severe economic difficulties and could not afford the cost of a cake. Others may suffer from health issues and cannot bake themselves – even if they wanted. Also, the idea of "teaching" people how to bake, as well meant as it might be, is much more complicated than it sounds. Baking requires quite a bit of special equipment, but also time, experience and certain skills. Not everybody has the luxury to do this.

Against this backdrop, a homemade birthday cake can make a huge difference:

- With a personalised cake made just for themselves, birthday children feel special and appreciated a memory that can last a lifetime.
- The families are able to invite their friends and neighbours for a birthday party and share the cake with them.
- Volunteer bakers, families and referring organisations often work together closely and sometimes even form relationships that last longer than a day.



By working together with a range of other individuals and organisations, Free Cakes for Kids
volunteers have built strong ties and make a much broader difference in their communities.

Here is some feedback received from a Free Cakes For Kids volunteer; parent; and referrer:

Volunteer: "Not every charitable gesture has to be big to be significant. Baking cakes enables people to do something selfless which benefits other people. I say it's selfless, but bakers enjoy the creativity that comes with planning a cake. And if your group bonds, it is a marvellous way to make friends with other bakers. This particular project serves to remind us that sometimes a simple thing like a cake can have a great deal of meaning to a child. It makes them feel special, cared for, and just like any other child on that one day."

Parent: "Thank you so much for my daughter's birthday cake. I am so thankful words can't express it. I will send a photo tomorrow when she has seen it. I don't think you know what this means to me and to other families, feeling very blessed this afternoon."

Referring organisation: "Our children are all in difficult circumstances — many may never have had a homemade cake before. The mums like it, too — it's a lovely surprise they can arrange for their children, and we believe it can help repair relationships. I'll find out from the mum what the child would like, the cakes are personalised, and there's always huge excitement when the cake is delivered."

Free Cakes for Kids is not about the cakes. Rather, it uses cakes to bring happiness, create memories and build relationships.

Our Shared Values

Every Free Cakes for Kids volunteer commits to six guiding principles – our shared values. We take these very seriously, and it is absolutely crucial that you do, too.

- 1. We bake cakes for families in need.
- 2. We do our best to keep things safe.
- 3. We bake for love and not for money.
- 4. We care for our volunteers.
- 5. We understand our communities and local needs.
- 6. We help each other help ourselves.



How to join the movement

We asked our volunteers why they joined the Free Cakes For Kids movement. This is what they had to say:

- "I really want to **make a difference** to those kids. When I was young I struggled a lot, so if I can help some kids these days by doing what I like to do anyway, that's great."
- "It's good **to get in touch with people I don't usually meet**. Many of the families live in a different part of town, so this really keeps me grounded."
- "I like **to try out new cakes and designs**. Free Cakes for Kids is a nice challenge to try out new techniques."
- "To be honest, it's also great opportunity to show off my baking skills. I like to post a picture of every cake I bake on Facebook."
- "Free Cakes for Kids has been a great way for me to get in touch with other hobby bakers."
- "I think I learnt a lot about organising with Free Cakes for Kids. There is always a new challenge. Plus, it looks great on my CV."

Food Safety

Food safety is our number one priority and so your first task will be to make things safe. Before you start baking, there are a couple of things you might want to check in terms of food safety:

- What do I need to know about food safety?
- How can I learn more about basic food safety requirements?
- Whom can I turn to for any food safety related questions?

One great starting point is to get in touch with your local Environmental Health Officer (EHO) or council to enquire about local food safety requirements. The EHO will be your first point of contact for any food safety/hygiene related questions.

We consider it best practice to register your kitchen with the local EHO or council. The legislation varies from county to county and some EHOs will not even visit or assess/rate your kitchen for making cakes unless you bake over a certain amount of cakes per week/month. With council budget cuts widely publicised, some councils view cake making at such low risk and a highly populated area that they will not visit unless they feel it is essential. You should still register with the EHO though and you must do this before you intend to start as a volunteer baker. They will then decide if they feel the need to come and inspect/rate your kitchen. The registration is free of charge.

From experience, the EHO will ask how Free Cakes For Kids works and so for clarity we suggest the following responses:

• You bake cakes in your home kitchen;



- The cakes you provide are **low risk** (no meat, no raw eggs, no fresh cream);
- You bake cakes every so often, so the frequency is **low**; and
- There is no money involved the cakes you bake are free of charge.

Another great source of information is the Food Standards Agency (FSA). The FSA is the official body in the UK that governs food safety for restaurants and catering businesses. The FSA also gives advice for volunteers and charity groups that want to provide food in a village hall, or other community setting. Look specifically for such information on their website (www.food.gov.uk).

Other things to consider are:

- What do I need to know about the child's dietary requirements?
- How do I ensure basic food safety requirements while baking the cake?
- How am I going to transport the cake in a safe way?
- Where would be a good place to meet the family?
- Does the family or referrer have my **contact details** (and I have theirs) to arrange for a safe cake handover?

Finding a Family

The next big challenge will be to find a family to bake for. As with many things in life, it's good to start small and grow with your experience. Maybe there is already someone in your local community who is baking cakes for families in need. Ask around and search the web to find out before you get started.

One of the biggest challenges in the beginning is to find a family that would appreciate your help. But fear not: if you think this is difficult, you are not alone. Many bakers struggle at this point, and it is not hard to see why. If you have not baked any cakes yet, you cannot show that your project works. And in order to show that your project works, you have to bake some cakes. So who are all these families in your community – and how to find them?

Quite simply:

- 1. Ask your friends, colleagues and neighbours they might know a family in need
- 2. Try and find out where families in need go, e.g. foodbanks, local charities, schools etc
- 3. Let people know that you would be happy to bake for a child
- 4. Leave your contact details
- 5. **Wait...**



TIP: Celebration cakes

If you find it difficult to make your first connection, you could offer to provide a bigger celebration cake for a local charity. A lot of potential partners will have events which need a cake and you can be sure to receive a lot of attention. Some organisers found this was a great opportunity to bake together with their new volunteers "as a group" and having a reference made it easier to approach other organisations. Christmas, Easter and Halloween are great starting points for making celebration cakes.

Taking Responsibility

The moment you agree to make a cake as a Free Cakes for Kids volunteer, you are taking on a range of responsibilities:

- for **families** by baking a safe cake and not sharing their contact details;
- for volunteers you work with by making them aware of the shared values of Free Cakes for Kids;
- for the movement in general by living the shared idea that means shared responsibility; and
- for yourself by not taking unreasonable risks and daring to say "no"

Yes, we are all volunteers, and there is only so much we can take on. However, please remember that if you want to be part of the movement, then everything you do in your home kitchen and local community will be your responsibility. This is what has made Free Cakes for Kids strong: local empowerment.

TIP: Picture book

Collect photos of all your cakes in a small photo album. Very soon, you will have an impressive collection of birthday cakes, which is fun to browse and demonstrates to people exactly what you do!

Dare to say "no"

Families might ask you for all kind of cakes. Some requests might be outside your comfort zone, or what you can safely provide, e.g. a gluten-free-egg-free-sugar-free cake for a child with special dietary requirements. As much as you would like to help this family, you might be better off saying "No" to this special request.

Also, you might be asked for a 20-inch-pirate-themed cake to match the theme of the birthday party. It is okay to manage the family's expectations early on in the process, and to suggest alternative simple cakes that you are happy to provide. After all, we are not professional bakers but want to help out when and where possible.

Getting started as a volunteer can take a lot of time and energy. In the beginning, you might be superenthusiastic, you dedicate hours and hours to finding out about food safety, you are buzzing around telling everyone about the movement, and your motivation for the cause is endless. Keep in mind that things take time. Don't be disappointed if things go wrong or don't work out immediately. So please enjoy the journey and take your time.



Ask yourself:

- Whom would I like to bake for?
- How do I define "need" in my community?
- How can I make sure that I manage expectations early on?
- How much time and resources can I give to the movement?
- When is the time that I want to start involving others?
- How will my volunteering change once I start setting up a group?



How to start a Free Cakes For Kids group

Understand what you are getting into

Congratulations! You have tackled the first steps as a Free Cakes for Kids volunteer and are now inspired to start a group in your local community. Starting a new group is a fantastic idea and creates more cakes; more happy children; and more fun. But it also introduces some new challenges.

- Starting a Free Cakes for Kids group is basically about community organising and not so much about baking. In fact, most volunteers who organise a local group rarely bake themselves because they are so busy doing other things.
- A big part of your job will therefore be talking to people and explaining the idea. For many organisers,
 this is the best part since they enjoy a good chat and meeting new faces. For others, the prospect of
 calling strangers on the phone or asking their local printer for free business cards can be quite
 daunting.
- As an organiser, you will also take on responsibilities that others don't have to worry about. For
 example, if something goes wrong, you will be the first point of contact for your volunteers, but also
 for people outside your group. This can be an exciting challenge, but also very stressful.
- Finally, starting a group takes time in at least two ways. First, getting a group going so that it continues even if you have to leave one day will take months or even years. Second, in order to get there, you will have to put in a certain amount of hours yourself. How much will differ from person to person and depend on your work and life situation. However, once you have become the point of contact for a lot of people, expect to volunteer at least a couple of hours per week.

Of course, people have different skills, preferences and life situations. Many organisers do not do this on their own, but work with others in a team. This does not only have the advantage that they have a sparring partner, who can challenge and support them, it also means that you can share both work and fun with others.

Connect with other group coordinators

Before you set up a group, it is worthwhile checking that you really are the only one doing this. You can do so by asking around in the community, by searching on the internet and by checking out the Free Cakes for Kids map on the website. Once you have established that there is no one else doing Free Cakes for Kids in your local community, and you still want to set up your local group, then it's time to take the next steps:

- 1. Define your community;
- 2. Set up your contact details; and
- 3. Know your volunteers.

Doing this alone could be a daunting task. The good news is: you don't have to do by yourself, as there are many volunteers around the UK who have already established a local group. So what are you waiting for? Get



in touch with your peers and hear from them what has worked and what hasn't. You can find all contact details on the Free Cakes for Kids website.



Free Cakes For Kids group coordinators meeting in Liverpool.

When you connect with your peers, you might want to start the conversation by talking a bit about yourself, who you are, what you do, and what motivates you to get involved. Together, you can work through the next steps of defining your community, setting up your contact details and making new community connections.

Define your community

A common question people ask in the beginning is: what actually is "my community"? Is it "London", "North London" or rather "Notting Hill"? How big is too big and how small is too small? And how can I find out? Often, determining the scope and name of your group is a piece of cake. In a small town like Bicester or Swansea, there are not really alternatives. But what about a city like Birmingham with more than one million inhabitants? Or what if you live in a rural area with many smaller villages but no clear centre? Two aspects are crucial here:

- 1. What do the people in your area identify with? This is key because people are most likely to support you when they feel they do something for "their" neighbourhood, borough, town or village.
- 2. What scope is still manageable? Good personal relationships are crucial for running a Free Cakes for Kids group. So imagine what would happen if you had to travel for an hour to meet up with a potential volunteer or hand over a cake.



Historically the network has encountered many common issues when setting a community and boundary for a group. We have provided the below examples from past experience, which we hope will help you in your decision:

- Have a look around: A good starting point is usually to keep your eyes and ears open. What do people
 talk about? What is your local paper called? Are there other community groups that have done the
 work already?
- **Get the numbers:** In Bicester, Antonia and her team of five are more than busy in a community of 28,000 people. The Oxford group, which has been around for a while, works in a city of 120,000 (excluding students) with currently 25 volunteers. So keep in mind that there is natural limit of how much a group can do. In case of doubt, start small. You can always expand later.
- Know your neighbours: Alison lived in a rather well-off village in West Oxfordshire. Her problem was that there simply were no families she could have helped in her community. After some trial and error, she decided to cover a much larger area and started Free Cakes for Kids West Oxfordshire.

 This is a bigger, but also much more diverse area, where she can find both families and volunteers.

Luckily, people have done this before. So bring this topic up when you speak with your peers and ask them how they have defined their community. In case of doubt, start small and grow with your experience.

Set up your contact details

Most volunteers who set up a group have at least two means of communication: an e-mail account and a telephone number.

Since you will not want the group to depend on you in the long run, it is better to not use your own e-mail address. The advantage of a dedicated Free Cakes for Kids e-mail are:

- You can hand it over one day;
- You can share access with volunteers to split the work; and
- You protect yourself from mixing your personal affairs with those of the group.

Most coordinators have an e-mail account with one of the big providers like Gmail, Yahoo or Hotmail – eg: freecakesforkidslambeth@gmail.com. Other groups have their own website and run their own e-mail accounts, such as at info@freecakesoxford.org.uk.

A telephone number is useful both for cake requests and to have a number on which everyone can reach you if they have concerns or problems.

Some use their landline, although this can be inflexible and difficult to change at a later date. Others buy a prepaid mobile phone – a dedicated number with a mailbox for your group. This does have additional costs associated with setting it up, however. Again, others get a Skype or Google account with an online number.



Most people begin by using their own phone number and only change it later. Whatever you decide, with an e-mail address and a telephone number, you are ready to go.

TIP: Business cards

A really useful tool that has been effective is to create a pack of business cards. These are easy to make – your local printer might even give you them for free or at a special rate and there are some cheap providers online.

Know your volunteers

Getting more people involved from your local community, and giving them responsibility, will mean you will find it easier to grow your group. Similarly, your responsibility will grow in two ways:

- 1. You will be responsible for recruiting, training and retaining volunteers; and
- 2. You will be responsible for the cakes they make.

This is a big change from doing it all yourself, and the reason why you want to know your volunteers.

Most local groups meet all their volunteers, ask them to complete a volunteer form and run them through their food safety policy before signing them up to bake cakes. With more cake requests, you will need more volunteers. On the other hand, you will not want to have more volunteers than you really need. This can be difficult to balance: at times, it will be very busy with a few cake requests per week. At other times, there will be nothing for a while so that you wonder whether people might have forgotten about you. Here are a few pointers about working with volunteers:

- Recruiting volunteers: Trustworthy and committed volunteers are what you're looking for. It's really
 important that both you and your volunteers know what you expect from them and what they can
 expect from you. If you mutually decide you'd like to work together, start by taking their details name, address and contact details. Some groups like to see ID from new volunteers, particularly if
 they don't know them.
- Training volunteers: It's really important that your volunteers know what to do what the food safety guidelines are and also what you expect from them in terms of availability and reliability.
- Retaining volunteers: Many groups hold regular meetings or events for their volunteers to enjoy the social aspect of volunteering, as well as sharing news and updates. The key is to keep in touch even if you're quiet in terms of cake requests or referrals. By meeting up regularly you build a caring community; share advice on baking and delivering; and answer any other queries they may have. It's also important to find out about the strengths of your volunteers beyond baking someone might be skilled at working with the media, or designing websites, or talking to community organisations, or delivering cakes with their car. The possibilities are endless. Find out what else your volunteers can do to grow your group.



You might want to discuss all of this with other Free Cakes for Kids group organisers, by making connections and keeping in touch.

TIP: Volunteer Magnet

Some Group Coordinators recommended the book 'Turn Your Organisation Into A Volunteer Magnet' by Andy Fryar, Rob Jackson and Fraser Dyer. It is available for free online.





Get listed on the Free Cakes For Kids website

In order to benefit from our caring community of like-minded volunteers, we have established a process for getting listed on the Free Cakes for Kids website. This process is organised around our values, especially the idea of "helping each other to help ourselves". There is no central team that vets a new volunteer or group. Instead we grow our network of Free Cakes for Kids local groups through peer endorsements.

This is how the peer endorsements work:

- 1. You get in touch with two existing groups.
- 2. You speak to them, ask them questions and exchange ideas on how to run a group in your local community.
- 3. After they have gained some confidence, you can ask them to give you their endorsement.
- 4. You complete the online form and name your two peer endorsements.
- 5. Your peer endorsements will be publicly listed on the website.

It is important that you have connected with your peers **BEFORE** you complete the form. Free Cakes for Kids is built around relationships, and we value relations between new and existing groups right from the start.

This will be a good incentive for you to get in touch with your peers and to keep them posted. By being connected to one another we will knit a close network of caring community groups. A true win-win for everyone involved in Free Cakes for Kids!



You can find the online form to get listed on the website <u>here</u>.

TIP: Distributed cake sales

Why not organise a cake sale for your group? This does not need to be a special stall at some market or event.

Instead, get your volunteers together to bake and have friends and colleagues sell them at their workplace.

Such a "distributed" cake sale is easy to organise and has two advantages. One, you make some money that you can use for materials or initial costs. And two, you reach out to a lot of people, who will all learn about your project and thereby gather some support.





How to grow the movement

Giving peer endorsements

Part of being involved with Free Cakes for Kids as a group organiser is to help other groups to get going. We do so by having friendly chats with each other, which is part of the sign-up process. We call this process "peer endorsements". As an already established group, you will be contacted from time to time from newbies who would like to start their own group. These volunteers want to speak to you, to hear your views and stories and to learn from your experience. Here are a few things you can do to support the peer endorsement process:

- Make sure that your contact details are always up to date on the website
- Expect an email or a phone call at any time; a new volunteer might be interested in getting in touch and learn from your experiences!
- When someone contacts you make sure you agree on a time and date that works for both of you. You
 should not to feel obliged to make time "the next day". Feel free to manage the new volunteer's
 expectation when it would be a good time for you. After all, we are all volunteers and only have so
 many hours in a day!

During the call with the new volunteer, you want to find out about their ideas, and possibly manage their expectations. Starting a new group can be a huge task (as you have probably experienced yourself), so it's best to paint a realistic picture of how you've experienced community organising within Free Cakes for Kids.

After having spoken to each other, you might want to reflect on the call: Did you exchange enough information so that you are happy to endorse the new group? If you feel that you haven't found out enough, then maybe ask for another call. This is part of our shared values to help each other help ourselves.

Staying Connected

Free Cakes for Kids is a community of like-minded volunteers. There will be plenty of opportunity for you to connect with others, to discuss topics of shared interest, and to ask for help. However, it will be down to your own initiate to stay connected. We highly recommend using the private Facebook group for group coordinators for any questions and comments you have.

Getting Support

For any support, your first point of contact will be your two peers with whom you've been in touch when setting up your own group. Free Cakes for Kids is based on collaboration and best practice sharing, so for any practical tips your peers might be able to help.



If you cannot get help from your two peers, you might want to reach out to the wider community of Free Cakes for Kids volunteers by posting your question on the Facebook page (closed group).

Some questions, like volunteer engagement, legal advice or marketing your project might be questions that other volunteer organisations also have in your local community. It is always worth reaching out to them as well, to get support even though their service might not be related to baking cakes.

If you are still stuck and as a last resort, for example when you see the values of Free Cakes for Kids under threat, you can reach out to the Directors of Free Cakes for Kids.

Data Protection

GDPR and the Data Protection Act

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) will apply from 25 May 2018. It operates within a common set of rules applying across the (European Union) EU. Local FCFK groups are deemed to be a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act and The General Directive on Data Protection (GDPR), which means that it determines the purposes for which personal information will be used for. It is also responsible for notifying the Information Commissioner of the data it holds or is likely to hold, and the general purposes that this data will be used for.

Local groups will need to keep certain information about its volunteers, donors, referral agencies and service users in order to monitor performance, achievements and to operate effectively. It will also be necessary to process information so that volunteers can be recruited and informed of cake requests to provide the service we offer. To comply with legislation, information must be collected and used fairly, stored securely and not disclosed to any person unlawfully. To do this, local groups must comply with the principles set out in the Data Protection Act 1998 and the 2018 General Directive on Data Protection (GDPR). Information that is already in the public domain is exempt from the 1998 Act and GDPR.

Personal Data that is processed should be:

- 1. Lawful, fair and transparent
- 2. Limited for its purpose
- 3. Adequate and necessary
- 4. Accurate
- 5. Kept only for as long as needed
- 6. Provide for Integrity and Confidentiality

Local groups are exempt from registering with the Information Commissioners Officer as they are not-for-profit organisations.