



Reference: GOV006

The values we are focusing on for the next 5 years and how to welcome new members

There are almost 500 groups across England, Scotland and Wales. Many members who join the Ramblers have direct contact with their local Group, rather than the Ramblers Central Office.

Most Groups represent a geographical area, such as a town or district council, so are ideally placed to promote walking in their local area, develop local routes, campaign for better access and maintain local footpaths. It is mainly effective by building partnership relationships with local authorities and community organisations.

Some Groups specialise in different types of walking, e.g. Hike Groups provide activities for young people and 20s & 30s groups; while some Groups offer themed or special interest walks, short walks, family groups, countryside, local community, health or urban walking activities. .

It is critical for Groups to be welcoming and encourage new members to join their group, remain members and promote walking more widely. Please refer to the following page for further details.

One of the key strategic priorities is 'the way we work'. Below is a list of the values that groups, areas, volunteers, trustees and staff at the Ramblers should try to work by. If we put these values into practice, we will be a stronger organisation.

Welcoming - To all and particularly to newcomers

Positive – Looking to have fun and create enjoyment – have a variety of walking activities, promoting the benefits of walking

Empowering – Helping give people the confidence to help themselves

Inclusive – Welcoming people from diverse backgrounds and being sensitive to the concerns of different communities

Ethical – Being respectful of others, honest in what we say and thinking through the consequences of what we do

Democratic – Working to deepen and improve democracy within our organisation

Environmentally Responsible - Promoting activities and behaviors which are sustainable and which benefit the environment

For more information about the Ramblers Fresh air, firm ground, please refer to the document on this website – Ramblers Strategy, Fresh Air Firm Ground.





Reference: GOV006

How to welcome new members

Groups play a crucial role in welcoming new members. Many members join the Ramblers specifically to take part in the walks programme organised by the Group.

Some members have little intention of taking part with the Group when they join, but still may appreciate receiving other benefits that the membership package offer, along with a warm welcome.

When a new member joins the Ramblers they are sent the following information from Central Office

- A membership card
- A letter of welcome which lists the name of their nearest Group and the contact details.
- A 16-page colour booklet called **Information & Inspiration** outlining the work of the Ramblers.
- The latest copy of **Walk** magazine and *the Year book*

Some Areas provide Central Office with a separate introductory letter about the Area or the latest Area newsletter or walks programme. Where this is the case, this information is also included in the welcome pack.

Other than the name and the contact information, the Welcome Pack does not contain further information about the specific local Group to which the new member has been assigned.

How members are assigned to Groups

When a new member joins the Ramblers, they are assigned to a local Group based on their postcode. This automatic allocation is the default position, but members are also free to join any other Group of their choice. They can do this either by indicating their preferred Group on their application form, or by calling Central Office and requesting allocation to the Group of their choice.

This system of allocation means that amongst the membership of each Group there are some people who have actively chosen to join a particular Group, but that there are likely to be many more who know nothing of the Group on joining the Ramblers and who have simply ended up as Group members by virtue of where they live.

Many individuals join the Ramblers without having any knowledge of the Group structure and the fact that they will be automatically assigned to a Group.

When writing to new members it is important for Groups to remember that their audience can vary. Some are looking forward to receiving information about the Group and the programme of walks on offer. Others will have little initial interest in getting involved in the Group and its activities.

Sending a welcome letter to new members

Every Group is encouraged to send a letter of welcome to new members. Ideally the letter will provide

- a warm welcome to members



Reference: GOV006

- an explanation of the Group and how it operates
- an open invitation to members to get involved
- a reminder that the Group is run voluntarily and that new members are welcome to get involved in the running of it.

Groups write their own letters to new members. However, if a Group requires any assistance in drafting a letter or access to a template, please refer to the starter re-branding kit on this website.

We encourage groups to type new members' letters on branded headed paper. Each Area can order supplies of headed Ramblers notepaper from Central Office and then make this available to each Group. This is an excellent option for Groups as the paper is pre-printed with the Ramblers logo and the Ramblers charity and company numbers. Alternatively, use the letter headed template and send it by e-mail which is already set up on the system, to save postage and keep costs low.

Welcoming new members on walks

Many potential new members make their first contact with a Group by turning up to try out a walk. To be prepared for these occasions, it is ideal when all Walk Leaders are equipped with some welcome information about the Ramblers and the Group and see it as a part of their role to identify and welcome potential new members.

The Ramblers has some generic publicity material available and plenty of application forms so that Groups can be equipped to welcome newcomers in this way. Refer to the Role of the Publicity Officer on this website, for more information.

The policy of three walks for free

To encourage new members to join, the Ramblers has sought to establish a norm whereby potential new members can attend up to three walks with a Group before being expected to join. As Ramblers walks use public paths and need to be open to the public there is very little that Groups can do to actually enforce this principle. However, it is very rare indeed that individuals wish to abuse this principle of membership and participate with a Group without joining. This norm serves as a useful and reasonable principle with which to encourage membership to the Group. Groups are asked to make this principle widely known to prospective members and to use it as a mechanism to encourage membership.

