

THE ROLE OF THE CHAIRPERSON

What would I need to know
to become a Chairperson?

If you would like to attend a workshop, organise a workshop for a group, or simply purchase or download another resource from the Running Sport series, visit the following website for further information:

www.sportengland.org/runningsport

Sport England is an organisation committed to creating opportunities for people to start in sport, stay in sport and succeed in sport.

Sport England is the strategic lead for delivering the Government's sporting objectives in this country, and we distribute both Lottery and Exchequer funds to sport.

Our vision is to make England an active and successful sporting nation.

This resource forms part of the Running Sport series

Running Sport
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Glossary of terms

Chairman, Chair, Chairperson: The person may have been appointed as Chair of the club/organisation or as Chair of a meeting. Their role in the meeting is to oversee the business of meeting and to keep order amongst members. They have overall control, give direction, keep focus and give structure. Their ultimate responsibility is to take decisions on behalf of the committee following consultation with its members. The Chair takes responsibility for the day to day management of the club/organisation

President: The President is the figurehead of club/organisation representing the club/organisation in public

Federation: A collection of self governing clubs/organisations

Constitution: A written record of the principles that govern a club/organisation

Standing Orders: The rules that stipulate how business will be conducted

Annual General Meeting: A yearly meeting of members for holding elections and reporting the clubs/organisations business conducted during the previous twelve months

General Meeting: A meeting open to all members of a club/organisation to discuss an agreed agenda

Welcome

Welcome to this Running Sport resource. This forms part of Sport England's education & training programme that provides recognition, information and learning resources aimed at supporting volunteers in relation to the administration and management of their sporting organisation, club, group, team, or governing body.

I hope that you find the information of use in your sporting role and that you will continue to contribute to helping people participate in sport in England. Through you, a valued resource, one of 5.8 million – we know that we are on our way to achieving our goal of making England an active and successful sporting nation!

Thank you for all your support and good luck for your volunteering future – long may you continue!

Roger Draper
Chief Executive
Sport England

Chairperson and president

Many sports clubs/organisations are governed by voluntary members, and use committees and meetings to assist in the management of their club/organisation. This resource gives information on the structure of such committees and how to conduct meetings.

Meetings of more than two people need to have structure to ensure they are productive and that all parties have the opportunity to contribute to the discussion ensuring all relevant agenda items are resolved. A structured meeting will ensure all parties have agreed the outcomes and are aware of any action required. In order to keep structure and progression throughout the meeting a central figure must be appointed as Chairperson.

The Chairperson will normally be elected either from the entire organisation's membership or from those who sit on the executive or management committee. In the executive role the Chairperson not only chairs the meetings but also acts as principal officer throughout the year, making decisions whenever the need arises in consultation with other committee members.

In addition to the Chairperson many clubs/organisations have a President. This is usually in a Federation, which comprises of a small number of separate, self-governed clubs/organisations. Sometimes the same person may hold both positions of President and Chairperson. The presidential role has little or no involvement in the day-to-day affairs of the club/organisation and only attends meetings in a neutral and uncommitted capacity. This enables the group to have a discussion with an impartial person in the chair, which is particularly useful in negotiations where the Chairperson acts as a conciliator between two parties trying to resolve some kind of disagreement. Of course, if the club/organisation has a separate president, then he or she may undertake these functions. The President would chair or preside at general meetings, especially the Annual General Meeting.

If the President chairs the general meetings, the Chairperson is able to represent his or her personal views, and those of the committee. The members will feel that they have a neutral person in the Chair they can trust to give them a fair hearing if they disagree with the committee.

Term of office

The position of President, when there is a Chairperson, is less critical. Many good examples exist where a President is elected for one year only, and also where a President is elected for several terms, or even for life. In either case, the President's involvement in the day-to-day affairs of the club/organisation is less significant than that of the Chairperson. The President provides a public face for the club/organisation.

The Chairperson's term of office is usually governed in one of two ways. One way is to make a once-in-a-lifetime appointment, for one year only, rather like being appointed Lord Mayor. The alternative is to elect the most capable person and to allow that person to remain in office for as long as he or she continues to be re-elected.

The advantages of the annual system are that:

- It prevents an individual from becoming too powerful and influential
- It rewards long service
- It saves one person from having to carry the responsibility continuously
- The club/organisation gradually acquires a pool of skilled individuals

The disadvantages of the annual system are that:

- Each new Chairperson takes time to acquire knowledge and experience
- As the Chairperson begins to establish the requirements of the position, he or she is replaced
- It can encourage inconsistency and instability in the club/organisation when constantly faced with change
- The Chairperson may not gain any detailed knowledge of the work of the club/organisation, which might increase the power and influence of those who do remain in office for long periods, e.g. the Secretary, Treasurer or other staff

The advantages of having a long-term chairperson are that:

- The Chairperson becomes familiar with the workings of the club/organisation and can provide leadership with continuity and consistency
- The Chairperson becomes skilled at chairing meetings, which may improve the quality of the meetings and the decisions made

The disadvantages of having a long-term Chairperson are that:

- An individual can build up a wealth of knowledge, experience and authority, which may result in an club/organisation being 'controlled' by its Chair and not therefore listening to new ideas or ways of working
- The club/organisation might become so dependent on the Chairperson that it has difficulty finding a replacement when he or she retires

Neither system is perfect, a compromise which allows a Chairperson to be elected for a maximum period, for example not more than four years, can preserve the best of both.

A club/organisation needs to think carefully about its objectives before deciding to replace the Chairperson on a regular basis. The only circumstance in which this might be considered essential is when the club/organisation is a Federation, comprising a small number of separate self-governing organisations. In this case it may be necessary to ensure each organisation, in turn, appoints the Chairperson for a relatively short time, so that no one federation member can dominate its affairs.

Why have a meeting

Meetings can be a valuable management tool where creating a forum for planning, evaluating and communicating can be achieved.

Holding meetings may be a constitutional requirement. This is often the case for voluntary sports clubs/organisations and associations.

Meetings are the perfect forum for communicating information to a number of people. It means you save time, explain issues only once and everybody gets the same message rather than a distorted account of the discussion from a colleague.

Meetings give an club/organisation or a group of people within an organisation the opportunity to come together as a team and make decisions on previously discussed issues and explore all options fully and in consultation with all relevant parties. This collective contribution is essential in involving all team members, helping them feel that their contribution is valued and also to develop ownership of decisions taken.

A good meeting will:

- Motivate the 'team' of volunteers
- Allow the message to be put across and clarification sought
- Help forge good relationships between colleagues and members
- Promote sound decision making
- Clearly communicate issues
- Clearly define the outcome of decisions and action required

An unnecessary or unproductive meeting will:

- Waste time and money
- Be de-motivating and frustrating for members
- Diminish the status of important meetings
- Have no constructive outcome or action and therefore prevent the club/organisation from running effectively

Important issues to consider when chairing meetings

Start meetings on time. Allowing a meeting to start late gives the impression that the business to be undertaken is not important, and inappropriate behaviour will be rewarded. Punctual members will be kept waiting suggesting their time is not valuable. All these issues may result in a lack of respect for the Chair and discontent among members. Do not allow the start time of the meeting be dictated by latecomers and ensure that, even as volunteers, such behaviour is addressed should it happen regularly.

Indicate a finish time as well as a start time on the agenda. This acknowledges that members' time is valuable and gives everyone an idea of how long they should allocate for the meeting. It will also help to prevent people from rushing decisions or leaving before the end of the discussions. The Chairperson must be aware of the agenda items and roughly how long to devote to each one, thereby ensuring that all the important business is covered.

The Chairperson should ensure that everybody has a reasonable opportunity to air his or her views during a debate. Care should be taken that the same point is not frequently repeated by one person, or persons, who wish to dominate the discussion.

Some people may hardly speak at all. There are a number of reasons why this could be:

- They may have no interest in or understanding of the debate
- They do not wish to make a personal contribution, preferring to evaluate the arguments and reach their own conclusions
- They are nervous or shy
- They do not agree with the consensus view, but prefer not to say so at the meeting

Try to involve these people, particularly if they have some specialist knowledge. They will feel you value their input, and will respect you for taking the time to ensure they understand the issue. It will also encourage them to participate and voice any opposition. Do not assume there is no opposition, just because none has been voiced.

Whenever possible, confirm a decision by common consent of the whole meeting, rather than by a majority vote. To get this consensus, round off the discussion by saying, 'Is it agreed then ...?' or 'I take it we are all in favour.' Then restate the decision and wait a few seconds to give everybody a final opportunity to voice any opposition.

Decision making by consensus keeps the committee united and helps to prevent later complaints along the lines of: 'I didn't agree with the decision' or 'I didn't get a chance to have my say.'

Meetings do not always have to be formal or take place around a table – some of the best meetings take place standing up! In this way the meeting deals with important business and finishes promptly.

Some people see meetings as a social occasion, an opportunity for a chat and to exchange ideas. Try to allow for that, but not in the main part of the meeting.



Is your meeting necessary?

If people feel a meeting is pointless they will not contribute, or simply won't attend, so always ask yourself, 'Is this meeting really necessary?' before calling it. Unnecessary meetings make people feel negative towards volunteering their time. However, if everybody feels a meeting is essential they will be more alert and interested. They will feel their ideas and comments are not only welcome, but vital to the success of the project.

Rather than having numerous short meetings, which people feel is wasting time, reduce the number of meetings you call. It may mean you delay the decision on a small number of items and arrange a meeting at a time when a number of issues have arisen so there is significant amount of business to discuss.

If a topic does not require detailed discussion, hand out a printed report rather than giving a verbal one. Better still, attach the report to the agenda and circulate it in advance of the meeting. This will give members the opportunity to review the information and plan for the meeting which will result in a more efficient use of meeting time and a more informed and in depth discussion.

Qualities and characteristics of a good Chairperson?

A good Chairperson should be:

- Well-informed about the activities of the club/organisation and its current financial position
- Able to represent the organisation at local, regional and national levels
- Able to chair committee meetings and manage the general meetings, so that everybody has a chance to present their views
- Well-informed about the agenda of the meeting and the items to be covered
- Well prepared for the meeting
- Able to ensure that the agenda of a meeting is followed, that all business is completed, and that all decisions are properly understood and recorded
- Able to keep a debate focused avoiding any deviations
- Able to ensure that planning and budgeting for the future are carried out in accordance with the wishes of the members
- Unbiased and impartial and if personally involved in a matter prepared to give up the Chair during that particular discussion
- A good listener, who is able to summarise the main points of a discussion
- Able to communicate clearly and concisely to avoid confusion
- Conversant with the constitution and standing orders of the club/organisation, and with recommended procedure for the conduct of meetings
- Diplomatic and helpful, and able to get the best out of the other committee members
- Able to maintain the harmony of the group, even when there is disagreement about the proposed course of action



Committee meetings

The committee is the workhorse of an club/organisation, meeting regularly to make decisions to ensure the club's/organisation's efficient operation.

The business undertaken during committee meetings can be divided broadly into:

1. Items for information
2. Items for debate

1. Items for information

This relates to events that have already happened or decisions already made, and takes the form of reports, verbal or written, given to inform other members, who then have the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification.

2. Items for debate

This relates to future events. This enables the

whole team to discuss the issues and develop options for their resolution. Consultation with members often results in a better outcome and commitment to and ownership of the action to be taken.

Committee meetings can be less formal than general meetings, provided committee members do not take advantage of the informality to disrupt the meeting. The Chair should deal with minor disruptions positively, but should they become difficult to resolve more formal meeting procedures should be adopted.

Most people have some idea of how a meeting should be run, and many successful meetings are run in a low-key way, with informal ground rules. Larger clubs/organisations, however, need formal rules, for example Standing Orders, for conducting a meeting.

Annual General Meeting (AGM's)

An Annual General Meeting (AGM) differs from a working committee in that it will involve some people who will have no prior knowledge of the matters being discussed. These persons attend as individual members of the club/organisation to safeguard their own interests, and may be unaware of the background to the discussions. They represent the grass roots opinion of the club/organisation, and are useful indicators of the average member's view.

The AGM is a particular kind of general meeting, which, normally, is specifically referred to in the constitution. Most clubs/organisations have a statutory requirement to produce accounts, and the members have a right to view these accounts and the accompanying reports at the AGM.

The AGM is the forum where officers are elected and where amendments to the constitution or rules, and similar matters, are discussed and voted upon.

The AGM should also consider the previous year's annual report so that all members have the opportunity to say what they think about the way in which the club/organisation is being managed.

The AGM should not include matters of which prior notice has not been given. It is easy for a meeting to pass an ill-thought-out resolution, only to find the consequences are not what were intended.

Remember that calling everybody together is a good public relations opportunity. Make everyone feel they belong to and are contributing to the club/organisation, and not like outsiders who are intruding, once a year, into a closed group.

How to run a formal meeting

Most club and association meetings are informally run, with decisions taken by consensus. If there is a disagreement, it is important to follow a few simple rules to ensure a proper decision is made which cannot be challenged. This ensures that the meeting follows a structured and logical sequence.

The agenda is a list of topics to be discussed. Follow the items in the order they appear in the agenda and resolve one issue before moving on to the next.

A motion is a recommendation presented to the meeting for debate and approval. Some motions (e.g. to approve the minutes of the previous meeting) will be presented on the agenda by the Secretary (see the 'Role of the Secretary' Booklet). Others will arise from members during the course of the debate. In many clubs/organisations the constitution requires that motions for debate at general meetings are presented, in writing, in advance of the meeting.

The proposer is the person who presents (or 'moves') the motion. The seconder is a second person that expresses support for the motion. Some constitutions require motions to be proposed and seconded. In any case, standard procedure requires a motion to be seconded before it is open to general debate.

An amendment is a modification to a motion, presented and seconded by a third and a fourth person. The proposer of the original (or 'substantive') motion can choose to accept the amendment, in which case it replaces the original motion, or the proposer can decline to accept. If the amendment is not accepted, it is debated immediately and voted upon. If the amendment is approved ('adopted') it replaces the original motion and becomes the substantive motion. If the amendment fails, debate reverts to the original motion. In either case, the debate should end with a vote on the eventual substantive motion.

In a normal committee meeting there is no limit to the number of amendments that can be proposed to a substantive motion, but they should be debated separately in the order in which they were proposed. The Chairperson must exercise some control and should not allow amendments that simply negate the original motion. In many clubs/organisations the constitution does not permit amendments to be presented during a general meeting.

Voting rights differ from one club/organisation to another and may be different in general meetings and committee meetings. The Chairperson should study the rules of their particular club/organisation carefully and ensure they are understood.

There are different ways of voting at meetings, and the Chairperson must decide which is appropriate for the matter in question.

The options are:

1. A show of hands, where the Chairperson asks all those in favour of the motion to show, followed by all those against, and then any abstentions. The hands are counted and, if the vote is a tie, the Chairperson has a casting vote. Check the constitution to see whether the Chairperson is also allowed to vote in the first instance, or merely if there is a tie.
2. An alternative is a ballot when members vote in writing but remain anonymous. Ballot papers are counted and divided into those for and those against. A decision is made on the majority. This disadvantage of this is the process is far more time consuming.

Minute taking

Someone must be appointed to the task of minute taking. In a club/organisation with a formal structure this would normally be the Secretary but can be anyone of the attendees if no one holds this position. Minutes must be concise and a true reflection of the discussions that have evolved. Decisions and action must be clearly recorded and agreed by members of the committee.

Following the meeting the minutes should be typed and circulated to all members of the committee. The minutes are normally agreed or corrected at the beginning of the next meeting when members have had the opportunity to review them. Minutes can also be used as a method of communication to the rest of the club/organisation to inform them of action and decisions the committee have made.

Quick tips

Listen

- Stay alert
- Take notes
- Make sure evidence > Interpretation > Action

Control 'Chattering Monkey'

- Don't let discussion stray off the point
- Bring in another speaker
- Introduce new materials
- Cut in – 'Good point Graham'

Control the strong – Protect the weak – Don't jump to conclusions

- Stop interruptions
- Don't compete or question facts – it will intimidate the weak
- Invite the weak to participate – praise good ideas

Check everybody occasionally

- Start with the weak – what do you think?

Keep records – Flip Chart – Stick on wall

- Suggestions in their words
- Commit to consensus view – don't impose solutions

Harness creativity

- Acknowledge all contributions – build up ideas, even small ones



Questionnaires and self assessment

Influencing questionnaire

This is a questionnaire designed to discover your profile with regard to how you influence people. It is designed to help you establish your influencing style and to also increase your skill set.

Reflect on each of the following items below and select a score that best represents how you generally behave when you are influencing (or attempting to influence others).

Choose a number from 0 – 5 and place it in the corresponding score box.

0 means, 'I never do this'
 1 means, 'I rarely do this'
 2 means, 'I sometimes do this'
 3 means, 'I often do this'
 4 means, 'I always do this'

NO.	ITEMS	SCORE
1	I fully express my personal values when I talk to others	
2	I work hard to ensure that aims and objectives are absolutely clear	
3	I try to find out exactly what sort of help other people need	
4	I excite other people's imagination by communicating images of how the future should be	
5	I use rational argument to make points	
6	I am prepared to make a fuss to get things done	
7	I get myself into formal positions of power and influence	
8	I take great care to educate others so that they can understand what I am thinking	
9	I encourage and support people with good ideas	
10	I am empathetic when expressing what I believe in	
11	I make sure that people understand the objectives they should strive to achieve	
12	I help other people to solve their own problems	
13	I am good at vividly communicating what the future could be like	
14	I carefully collect data to demonstrate the validity of my case	
15	I push other people to give me support	
16	I take steps to acquire formal authority to enable me to implement my plans	
17	I encourage people to learn new ways of thinking	
18	I support those people who want to make changes for themselves	
19	I clarify to the other person what I believe is important to me	

NO.	ITEMS	SCORE
20	I carefully monitor the performance of others who are working with me	
21	I help people find effective answers to problems that concern them	
22	I am able to communicate what needs to be done and create a better future	
23	I ensure that my views are based on demonstrable facts	
24	I 'lean on' people who are not pulling their weight	
25	I acquire formal authority to give me more clout	
26	I ensure that people are given training	
27	I go out of my way to encourage people struggling to change things for themselves	
28	I have a clear code of principles that I communicate to others	
29	I make sure that I check on other peoples performance	
30	I help people find answers to their own problems	
31	I strive to inspire other people by the way I present my ideas	
32	I take great care to present logically sound arguments	
33	I use psychological pressure to get what I want	
34	I try to acquire formal authority and responsibility for getting things done	
35	I use education as a way of opening people's minds	
36	I give moral support to people who want to make changes	

Answer grid

Transfer your scores from the questionnaire to the grid below by adding up the total score for each row and inserting into the total column. Look at your totals – where is your highest score? This is your predominant 'style'.

Question	Score	Question	Score	Question	Score	Question	Score	Total	Style
1		10		19		28			I
2		11		20		29			II
3		12		21		30			III
4		13		22		31			IV
5		14		23		32			V
6		15		24		33			VI
7		16		25		34			VII
8		17		26		35			VIII
9		18		27		36			IX

Style explanations

Your profile gives you the opportunity to think about how you influence other people. There are nine distinct influencing styles described below. Consider each and identify those styles that you should develop further on the action-planning sheet. It may be helpful to discuss your profile with another person who can help you to consider how to increase your skills.

- I Value driven style
- II Goal setting style
- III Need fulfilment style
- IV Visioning style
- V Rational presentation style
- VI Pushing/driving style
- VII Institutionalising style
- VIII Educating style
- IX Supporting style

Value driven style

You have deeply held beliefs about what is good and bad, important and unimportant.

Goal setting style

You ensure that aims and objectives are clearly understood by all concerned and direct effort towards achievement.

Need fulfilment style

You are concerned with being practically helpful. You identify others' needs and show how these can be fulfilled.

Visioning style

Rational presentation style

You are good at argument and debate. Your facts are valid. You collect data, evaluate information, build a logical case and present sound arguments.

Pushing/driving style

You are influential because you use weight to cajole, demand, insist or push people to act differently.

Institutionalising style

You believe in obtaining formal authority to give a power base. You want to obtain powerful positions and build a legitimate role.

Educating power

You expose people to new ideas, experiences, concepts, possibilities or inner reflections.

Supporting style

You encourage people to identify needs, evaluate opinions, formulate action plans and take incentives into account.

Chairperson's self assessment

Circle each question with a 'Yes' or 'No':

1	Do you check that items from previous meetings have been actioned	Yes	No
2	Do you read meeting papers thoroughly and make margin notes	Yes	No
3	Do you set objectives and prioritise the agenda accordingly	Yes	No
4	Do you start on time	Yes	No
5	Do you set ground rules at the start of the meetings	Yes	No
6	Are you clear and specific	Yes	No
7	Do you adhere to the agenda	Yes	No
8	Do you make others be clear, specific and to the point	Yes	No
9	Do you allow opportunity for discussion	Yes	No
10	When several people want to speak do you indicate the order	Yes	No
11	Do you summarise discussions where appropriate	Yes	No
12	Do you listen and question	Yes	No
13	Do you ensure decisions are taken	Yes	No
14	Do you clarify who has the responsibility for actioning decisions	Yes	No

If you answered 'Yes' to ten or more questions you are actively influencing meetings to be smooth running and productive...Well Done!

If you answered 'Yes' to less than ten questions, try to address these areas.

Participant's self assessment

Circle each question with a 'Yes' or 'No':

1	Do you action all items from the previous meeting which are your responsibility	Yes	No
2	Do you read the agenda and papers in advance and make margin notes	Yes	No
3	Are you clear and concise? Do you keep to the point	Yes	No
4	Do you state your views	Yes	No
5	Are your suggestions constructive	Yes	No
6	If you disagree, do you say so and speak against	Yes	No
7	If something or someone is unclear do you ask for clarification	Yes	No
8	If you have insufficient information on which to take a decision do you ask for more information	Yes	No
9	If called on to do something you want to refuse, do you say no	Yes	No
10	Do you actively participate in the decision making	Yes	No
11	Are you an active, influencing participant in meetings	Yes	No

If you answered 'Yes' to seven or more questions you are making an active contribution to effective meetings...Well Done!

If you answered 'Yes' to less than 7 questions, then try to address these areas.



Useful contacts

Central Council For Physical Recreation

Francis House
Francis Street
London
SW1P 1DE
Tel: 020 7854 8500
Fax: 020 7854 8501
Email: info@ccpr.org.uk
Website: www.ccpr.org.uk

Child Protection In Sport Unit

NSPCC National Training Centre
3 Gilmour Close
Beaumont Leys
Leicester
LE4 1EZ
Tel: 0116 234 7278/7280
Fax: 0116 234 0464
Email: cpsu@nspcc.org.uk
Website: www.thecpsu.org.uk

Clubs for Young People

371 Kennington Lane
London
SE11 5QY
Tel: 020 7793 0787
Fax: 020 7820 9815
Email: office@nacyp.org.uk
Website: www.clubsforyoungpeople.org.uk

English Federation of Disability Sport

Manchester Metropolitan University
Alsager Campus
Hassall Road
Alsager
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Tel: 0161 247 5294
Fax: 0161 247 6895
Email: federation@efds.co.uk
Website: www.efds.net

Running Sport Hotline (general enquiries)

Tel: 0800 363373
Running Sport Support Team
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sports coach UK (general enquiries)

114 Cardigan Road
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LS6 3BJ
Tel: 0113 274 4892
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Email: coaching@sportscoachuk.org
Website: www.sportscoachuk.org

sports coach UK Business Support Centre (workshop enquiries)

Sports Development Centre, Loughborough
University
Loughborough
Leicestershire
LE11 3TU
Tel: 01509 226 130
Fax: 01509 226 134
Email: bsc@sportscoachuk.org
Website: www.sportscoachuk.org

Sports Leaders UK

Clyde House, 10 Milburn Avenue
Oldbrook
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Email: info@sportsleaders.org
Website: www.bst.org.uk

Women's Sports Foundation

3rd Floor, Victoria House
Bloomsbury Square
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Tel: 020 7273 1740
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Website: www.wsf.org.uk

Youth Sport Trust

Sir John Beckwith Centre for Sport
Loughborough University
Loughborough
Leicestershire
LE11 3TU
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