

Thinking of Setting up a Group?

Setting up a new group takes work and planning and there are a number of things you will need to think about. Thinking ahead and good planning before you start can save a lot of time and effort later on.

How you decide to organise your group is up to you but there is recognised good practice and those your group will be working with (like your bank manager, funders and members) may have requirements that you have to work within.

Here are the main things you need to think about;

What do you want to do?

What will your group do? Will it be just for those involved, its members? Is there a service you intend to offer to the wider community? What do you want to achieve? How will you know if you are being successful?

Where do you want to do it?

Where will you be based? Are you going to cover a geographical area or do you want to attract members who have a specific need regardless of where they live? You need to consider whether it is best to start locally and gradually expand rather than take too much on from the start.

Who will join your group?

Who are your potential members or the people who will use your service? It is important to research this properly. You need to make sure the people want what you are offering and/or in the area you are intending to work in.



It is also important to check whether any other organisation is offering the same services or support that you are intending to provide. Doubling up with other organisations can be expensive, a waste of resources and funders will not be attracted to working with you. If you find the support you want to provide already exists, consider joining the existing organisation and working with them.

Should you work in partnership with any other groups or organisations?

If you find a group/organisation already offering similar support, consider asking them if you can work together to develop something new or set up a group for them in your area if they are not already based there. You might share resources, premises or knowledge.

Can you commit the time and energy to do the work yourselves?

You may already have a core group of people who want to form this group. If you can all commit the time and energy to do everything yourselves you can get going. You may decide you need more volunteers or other expertise. It is important to make sure you can get this additional help.

Be realistic about what you need and make sure your team has the full range of skills necessary to get your group going and growing. Community pages in local newspapers, local radio, community notice boards, libraries, schools, colleges, and health centres are great places to let people know what you want to set up and to ask for people to join in.

Make a Plan for Action!

When you know what you are going to do and how you are going to do it, it is time to make an action plan.



Decide exactly which jobs need to be done and who is going to do each one. It is also important to know *when* people are going to get their jobs done by and what help they will need to do them. A Plan of Action tells your members, supporters, and other interested people, what you are doing, why, and how you will go about it. You will need a plan if you apply for a grant.

Make sure your plan explains:

- What your group aims to do – your goals
- How it plans to do it – the way it will work.
- The resources it has to do things (e.g. people's time and support; any special skills; money; equipment; premises etc.)
- Any other resources you needs, and how you hopes to get them (e.g. by recruiting volunteers or raising money)
- When you hopes to do things – draw up a timetable.

A good Action Plan will help you to decide on priorities. The Action Plan also lets you measure your achievements because you will be able to compare it with what your group has actually done, over time.

Do you need a Constitution?

If you do not have a set of rules you can easily end up with a team that is working in different directions and trying to achieve different things. A constitution makes sure everyone is clear about your intentions and what they need to do. Other groups have already written constitutions and to get one off the shelf rather than create it yourself works for most groups. It ensures that important tasks are not missed out and it is a chance for everything you need to think about to get discussed.



Do you need a Committee?

A constitution defines the governing body of a group as a Committee. The minimum you will need is someone to Chair the meetings, someone to write down what happens at meetings (a Secretary) and someone to look after the money (a Treasurer). Other Committee Members can be added and they may or may not have specific roles.

Holding a General Meeting

Generally, everyone involved in a group are usually members. Since you are setting up the group for them, they should ultimately say how it is all organised. At your first General Meeting you should accept your constitution and elect the Committee Members and Officers. You should have at least one General Meeting (Annual General Meeting) a year to complete group business, sanction what the committee does and elect members and officers for the Committee for the coming year.

Do you need a Bank Account?

You need to be able to manage your groups' money and it is therefore useful to open a bank account. The account should be opened in the name of your group and should have two signatories for all cheques. It is usually a better idea to have three or four signatories on an account, but to make sure any two of the named people can sign cheques. This will cover times when committee members are away or unable to sign cheques for the group.

Do you need to consider equal opportunities?

It is good practice to have an Equal Opportunities Policy organised, especially before applying for funding. Funders may ask to see your Equal Opportunities policy statement and if you do not have one it could mean your application is disallowed



automatically. Ensure you discuss Equal Opportunities rather than copy another group's policy. This will let you explore what issues of ethnicity/race, religion, gender and sexuality, ability/disability, age etc. are relevant to your group. Once you have a draft looking at another groups policy may help you to identify issues you might have missed.

Will your work involve children and young people or vulnerable adults?

By law, anyone who works with children, young people and vulnerable adults must be checked by their employer or the organisation they undertake work for.

The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) - Disclosure service

The CRB Disclosure service provides a regulated 'one stop' service for England and Wales offering access to records held by the police, together with those held by the Department of Health (DH) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). The Disclosure service assists groups to make more detailed employment checks, particularly for positions that include regular interaction with children and vulnerable adults. There is information about associated matters on the Disclosure service website is at: <http://www.crb.gov.uk/>

Child Protection Policy

Children England Network work with the NSPCC to deliver **Safe Network** which provides safeguarding (safe recruitment; accident prevention; child protection; and anti-bullying) advice chiefly focused on small organisations. They offer information online and free hard copy resources as well as a free helpline for groups. Help for advisors/ and groups can be found on the website including toolkits. Visit: www.safenetwork.org.uk



Other help

More help with starting Community Groups and Voluntary Organisations can be gained from your local support and development organisation (i.e. Community Action Voluntary Action, Council for Voluntary Service). To find your local organisation visit the NAVCA website www.navca.org.uk. They may also be able tell about grants from local trusts, your local council and other local sources.

