



# Getting Started

## Setting up a small community group

### Introduction

All projects and community or residents' groups start with an idea or a need to do something useful in the local community. Turning your idea into reality takes time and effort and allies.

If you want to offer a service, deliver a project or set-up a community charity you may need to find out more about the area and what is happening already in and around your local area. This might mean consulting the local community and finding out:

- Is anyone else planning the same work?
- Has it been tried before and if so did it work? (or why did it fail?)
- Are there gaps in local services that you can fill?
- Is there anyone else willing to help?
- Are there the people with the skills and time in the community to help turn the idea into a reality?

### What is a “Community”?

“Community” can often mean all the people living and working in an area. Community can also mean a group of people with a common identity such as nationality, gender, sexuality, religion or ethnicity.

Having a common identity does not mean people in that community are all the same. For example, the term “the Gorton community” can mean very little as Gorton is a diverse area with many religious social and cultural groups with people sharing different interests and having different needs or strengths. You will need to clearly establish which community, communities or people your idea can help and involve them in growing and developing the idea into a project.

### Growing your idea

Once you have firm idea and background information your idea needs to be grown into an aim with objectives or a plan. Through discussion with neighbours, colleagues or people in the community you will need to involve people either in a steering group or some form of community forum.

It is important to be realistic and set yourself simple easy and achievable goals that can be achieved with the skills time and resources you and your colleagues have to offer. Your aims and objectives need to be clear, realistic and achievable within a defined time scale.

This factsheet will help you grow your idea, formalize your group and think about your wider community.

You may also wish to read:

[Types of governance](#)

[Budgeting and finance](#)

### Quick links

[Formalising your group](#)

[Seeking help](#)

[Talking to your communities](#)

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Your aims state the overall purpose of the project or an organisation. Objectives are more specific and should be as detailed as possible.

Objectives need to tell your organisation how you will achieve your aims and act as steps towards achieving these aims.

If there are costs associated with your plan you will need to identify these and think about how you will raise the funds you need. If you want to seek funding from your local council or a charitable funder there may be requirements you need to meet before these funds are granted to your group. Once you have agreed your aims and objectives these can be incorporated into a costed funding application or a costed project plan.

### Seek help when you need it

Your organisation may need to seek professional help or expert advice to deliver your ideas for community action. If there are skills or knowledge gaps in your organisation vital to your project you will either need to provide or access training or seek professional help.

Professional help can cost your organisation money but council officers and organisations working with local councils may be able to provide expert help free.

Always ask for free help from organisations paid by your local council to provide you with support, it is what they are paid to do. If there are volunteers or people in your community who want to help but who do not want to get too involved ask them if they will act as advisors to your group. An advisor is a specialist who attends meetings but does not have the power to vote or influence decisions. Many professionals are happy to act as advisors as it carries no risk to them or their business.

In Greater Manchester there are a number of organisations that may be able to help.

In the city of Manchester: [Manchester Community Central](#)

In Bolton: [Bolton CVS](#)

In Bury: [Bury Voluntary, Community and Faith Alliance](#)

In Oldham, Rochdale and Tameside: [Action Together](#)

In Trafford: [VCAT](#)

In Salford: [Salford CVS](#)



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## Formalising your group

If your group intends to find funds and money to achieve its aims it will need to formalise, either as an unincorporated group or as a recognised incorporated body. Your group will need to choose:

- How it will operate and meet to make decisions
- Who can sign cheques
- Who is tasked with the duty of monitoring the finances and accounts
- Officers for safeguarding and health and safety if these are required

For additional guidance please see our [Factsheet—Types of Governance](#).

Your group will also need to open a bank account. Each bank will have its own forms and processes you will need to complete to open an account. Usually opening a bank account requires:

- a copy of your governing document
- a resolution or completed form signed by your organisations Chair or Secretary authorising key signatories
- the signatures and details of your organisations authorised signatories
- proof of address and residence for the authorised signatories

If you are seeking funding most funders will also require you to have:

- An Equal Opportunities Policy
- A Safeguarding and Child and Vulnerable Adult Policy
- A Finance Policy
- A Health and Safety Policy
- A Volunteers Policy
- A Complaints or Disputes Policy
- Public Liability Insurance which good funders will pay for as part of the application



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Remember, communities are diverse and people within it may need help or support to take part in your group's activities. The Equality Act 2010 identified nine protected groups of people that organisations providing services must consider, these are people disadvantaged through:

- Age this refers to a person having to a particular age or belong to a particular age range e.g. 18-30 year olds
- Disability: A person has a disability if she has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities
- Gender reassignment: The process of transitioning from one gender to another
- Marriage and civil partnership: Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters
- Pregnancy and maternity: Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. Protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding
- Race: Refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality citizenship ethnic or national origins
- Religion and belief: Belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief
- Sex: A man or a woman
- Sexual orientation: Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.

Once you have considered these issues you will need to then think planning your conversation with your community and beginning to put together your business / development plan. Please see our factsheets on [Community Engagement](#) and [Business Planning](#) for more information.

Stuck? Feel free to drop us a line.



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### Things to think about when you talk to your community

Issues for you	Awareness	Communication	Resources	Relationships	Engagement
	<p>What do you know about the community? Diversity History Health, Education Employment</p>	<p>Is there a barrier to communication? Do you need written translations and/or sign or language interpreters? How will you contact the community? How will you explain your aims – how will you listen to the community's needs?</p>	<p>How much time do you have to commit to this work – is this realistic to achieve your aims? How much will this work cost your service – where are funds? Have you considered costs for the community group – can you cover these costs? What will you leave behind – how will you update or maintain it?</p>	<p>Has the community consented to take part – or have they been “encouraged”? How will you involve the community after the current work? How do you ensure the relationship is with the whole team or service – not just you?</p>	<p>Have you developed a plan – have you involved the community in the planning? Are there any issues which may affect the engagement? What are the limits to the engagement – have you made this clear to the community?</p>
Issues for the community	<p>What do you want and why? What do you do? How long will it take?</p>	<p>How do they contact you or your group – when and where? Will you listen to them and help them? How often will you need them?</p>	<p>Will you cover costs or pay expenses? What will you leave behind – what will you deliver?</p>	<p>Are you just “ticking a box”? Is the relationship meaningful – will it help the community? What happens when the person they know moves on?</p>	<p>Where does this fit with other plans? What will the community gain from this?</p>

