



Community &
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Starting a New Group – Points to Consider

There are many different reasons why people start up groups. A statutory service may have closed down due to lack of funding, there may be a local landmark that has fallen into disrepair and the community wants to do something about it, or an existing informal group might want to formalise its structure in order to apply for funding.

Whatever the reason, a number of people with a shared aim can organise themselves into a group that can take effective action. However whilst you may want to set up your group quickly, it is worth taking the time to set it up properly. Problems can be caused later if you don't have the things in place to make sure your group is set up in a way which works best for you.

Sometimes setting up a new group is not even necessary. Consider what services already exist locally to meet the particular need. Is there a gap? Has someone already had this idea and failed to make it work? If so, what are the lessons that can be learnt from this? It is always worthwhile doing some research to see if there is a similar group already set up in your area and if so, having a discussion with them to see if you can join forces. The advantage of this is that you are strengthening the already existing group and benefitting from shared knowledge and expertise. Learn all you can about the community in which you want to establish your group and be prepared to revise your intentions where necessary.

If you decide after taking this into account, that a new group is the best way forward then your next step should be to consider the group's aims and objectives. These need to be clear, realistic and achievable within a defined time scale. Aims should represent the overall purpose of the group. Objectives are more specific and should be as precise as possible. They should set out the ways in which the group will go about achieving its aims.

Your next step would be to consider what resources you already have at your disposal – do you have a venue, people to run the group, and other resources? Is there sufficient knowledge amongst the people who are involved? Recruiting additional help at the beginning means you can spread the work load and have a good base to start from.



At an early stage you should consider the potential risks involved in the proposed running and activities of the group. Risks are more likely to materialise if you are planning to take on a lease, buy property or employ people and this may then dictate the type of legal structure you want to set up.

There are different ways a group can be set up or 'constituted', depending on what the aims and objectives are. Below are examples of different types of legal structures that a group can take:

- Unincorporated Association
- Charitable Trust
- Company Limited by Guarantee Charitable Incorporated Organisation Community Interest Company
- Community Benefit Society

We have more information about these legal structures in our information sheet 'Structures for Groups'

This information is given for general guidance only.

Specific advice can be obtained from the Development Team at CVS by emailing advice@cvsce.org.uk or by calling 01270 763100