

1a: Starting a new group

If you are interested in setting up a new voluntary or community organisation there can be a mind-boggling number of things to consider: decisions to be made, information to be gathered, and jobs to do. However, if you tackle this process with a good plan of action and with plenty of help and support, then it isn't as daunting as it might seem.

Voluntary and community organisations exist to help a particular group of people or a specific cause. With the right planning and support, you can go a long way to making a difference in your local community.

This factsheet lists the main choices, decisions and actions you will need to address. The checklist approach, with space to make notes, will help you to track your progress.

What you need to ask, find out, or decide:

- **What do you want to do? What needs/problems/issues are you going to address?** *(You need to have a specific idea about exactly what the group you are setting up is going to do and why.)*
- **How do you know about these issues?** *(Whom have you spoken to? What evidence have you collected and how did you find it?)*
- **Are you overlapping with existing groups? What other organisations are already providing the same/similar services to the ones you aim to deliver?** *(How do you know about them? Have you contacted them? Duplicating what other groups are doing won't help you when it comes to trying to get support, funding or volunteers so it is a good idea to ensure that what you want to do is needed and is either new or unique in some way, or that there is a need for additional services because of high demand.)*
- **Will you be working in partnership with any similar organisations and how will you do this?** *Can you make your idea an addition to their already successful organisation? Can you work together to develop a new approach? If you are in a similar geographical area then you could perhaps share premises and work together for the benefit of both groups?*
- **What skills/expertise/capacity do you have to address these needs?** *(Why are you /is your organisation the best placed to help?)*
- **What activities and services will you deliver?**
- **Where will you deliver these activities and services?** *(Do you have a venue? What is your geographical reach? For example, are you going only to cover Levenshulme or are you going to cover the whole of Manchester, or Greater Manchester? Be realistic about*

this – if you only have the resources to cover a small area don't try and overstretch yourself.

- **Who will run and manage the organisation?** *(Do you have at least 2 other unrelated people with the skills and time to help you manage the organisation and the decision making?)*
- **Who will deliver the activities and services?** *(Will you be employing staff? Do you want/need to be paid for what you do? Will you be taking on contracts, leases or owning property either now or in the near future? If yes to any of these, then you will need to consider a legal structure for your organisation and should also read **Factsheet 3: Choosing a legal structure**)*
- **Whom do you want to help?**
*(Who are the individuals or groups of people you will support? Groups, projects and services are usually set up to provide a solution to a problem, a need or an issue and to bring about positive change for people. The individuals or groups of people your organisation will support are called **beneficiaries**.)*
 - *For example, are they people affected by a specific issue or living in a defined geographical area?*
 - *Are you going to work with all the residents of that area or with a particular community of interest?*
 - *Think about the resources you will need to have in place to be able to help your community / beneficiaries*
 - *The Equality Act 2010 applies if you are planning to work with a specific group defined by a 'protected characteristic' (disability, age, race, ethnic origin, nationality, nation, origin, gender, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, gender reassignment, or religion or other belief). An example would be a domestic violence charity which works solely with women. You should take advice to ensure it is legal to limit your activities or services in this way.*

Next steps...

Once you have worked through this factsheet on starting a group, the next factsheets **1b: Setting up a group** and **2: Constitutions** and **3: Choosing a legal structure**, will help you develop your organisation and plans further.

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