

COMMUNITY ACTION: MK

Setting up your Group

What will it be like?

Setting up a new organisation can be enjoyable, and can give you a lot of satisfaction. It takes energy, enthusiasm and hard work, and sometimes a good deal of patience, to make a success of a new organisation.

First steps

The best way to start is to bring together a small number of people who share your interest and talk with them about what you could do. At this stage, you want people to contribute their ideas and experiences, so as a group, you can decide what you want to focus your attention on.

How to find other people

- Ask people you know have an interest in the subject – friends, neighbours, community members, etc
- Use the local 'grapevines' – advertise in community centres, on community noticeboards, in libraries, through Parish councils and community workers
- Advertise in local media (newspapers, radio etc)
- Use social media to spread the word

You need to tell people what you are trying to do, and ask interested people to contact you (so make sure you include some way of getting in touch!)

Only a few people may turn up to your initial meeting but it is important to get their input at all stages of the process.

Setting Aims and objectives

Once you have a few people interested, you need to discuss what it is your group will do - in other words, set your aims and objectives.

At this stage, people may have very different ideas, so you need to be open and listen to other people's viewpoints. Discuss their ideas and see if you can come to an agreement about what it is you want to focus on.

A good place to start is to think about what issue or problem you want to tackle. Don't be surprised if people see the issue in different ways to you – explore all the options!

Investigate Other Organisations

Once you have all agreed on your aims and objectives, it is important to see whether there are any other local groups are doing a similar thing.

There are around 1400 groups in Milton Keynes alone, so you need to check that you are not duplicating the work of other groups. If you have a very similar project to someone else, perhaps think about working together to share resources and experience, or perhaps simply joining their group instead of setting up a new one.

If you want to know what other groups are out there, you can see a list of voluntary and community groups on MKWeb

<http://www.mkweb.co.uk/charitable-and-voluntary-organisations>

Your first meeting

So you've got some interested people, have set your aims, and have checked to see that you are not duplicating the work of others. Now it's time to have your first meeting.

Normally you would hold a public meeting to tell others what you are trying to do. You can publicise this to the wider community, to other groups who work in your field, or prominent members of the local community (e.g. local councillors, local authority staff, parish councillors etc). It is up to you who you invite, but the idea is to:

- Tell others what you will do
- Attract more volunteers or support
- Raise your group's profile
- Get input from others about how you can develop

Your meeting could be a formal launch or an informal chat over a cup of tea. Whichever approach you take, make sure you record who was there, and the main points of the meeting so you have a record to draw upon. Even take photos if you can (and have permission from the attendees!)

You can also use this meeting to see if people would be willing to sit on your management committee. The management committee normally consists of a Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary, plus a few general committee members. The role of the committee is to make the overall decisions about the group and its work, and to act as the accountable people for the group. You can find out more about the roles of the committee in our other information sheets.

Drawing up your Governing Document

A governing document is a set of rules that all members of the group agree to abide by. Community Action: MK have simple templates you can use, but you will need to alter them to suit the needs of your group.

Your governing document will detail your aims and powers, how your management committee and membership will work, and how decisions will be made. It is important to have a governing document as it shows you are democratic and accountable, and can be referred to if there are any disagreements within the group or if decisions need to be made.

Once you have agreed the content, the governing document is signed by committee members and 'adopted' (agreed on) by people entering your group.

Finding volunteers

You may find volunteers come forward as they hear about your project. Alternatively you can advertise with Community Action: MK who can help you to find volunteers and talk to you about how best to manage and support volunteers. [Email us on volunteering@communityactionmk.org](mailto:volunteering@communityactionmk.org) to find out where to start.

Making a plan

It is important that your group draws up a simple plan to work out what you want to do, why you want to do it and how you will do it. You always need to think about how the activities you plan help you to achieve your group's overall aim – if they do not, you need to reconsider whether you should be doing them at all!

Your plan should include:

- What you want to do and why
- How you plan to do this
- Details of the resources you have in place (e.g. people's time and skills, money, equipment, use of premises etc)
- Details of resources you need and how you plan to get them
- Timetable of your activities, and the steps you need to reach your aim
- Details of how you will show if your event/activity was successful

If you have lots of ideas, it is a good idea to prioritise them. It is better to do a couple of things really well than to take on too much and not achieve what you want.

If you can, allocate specific jobs to people as it is easier to keep track of your progress then.

Funding and managing money

Even at this early stage, you may need to think about finding funding to allow you to run your activities. There are lots of different ways to raise funds, from do-it-yourself fundraising to applying for grants.

Talk to our Support Team for more help – Support@CommunityActionMK.org - or call 01908 661623. You could also sign up for our monthly funding alert which contains lots of up to date funding opportunities. The link is on the right hand side of our homepage at www.communityactionmk.org

If you need help setting up a group, please do get in touch.

This information sheet has been produced by Community Action: MK and was last updated in 2015. Community Action: MK has taken all reasonable precautions to ensure that information contained in this document is accurate, but stresses that the content is not intended to be legally comprehensive.