

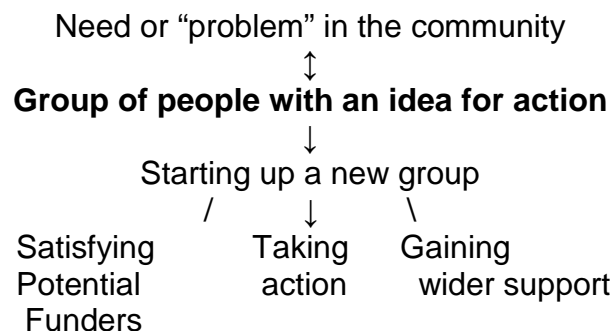


Starting a new group

This is one of a series of factsheets for voluntary and community groups issued by West Norfolk Voluntary and Community Action, WNVCA. This factsheet assumes that you are setting up a “charitable” group. But, even if non-charitable, most of the points still apply.

1. An idea and a vision shared by several people

The life of a community or voluntary group starts with an idea.



This factsheet describes what needs to be done to turn it into a group which can galvanise support, and take action.

2. Starting a new community or voluntary group - the steps to follow

- Decide on the name
- Get a group together to brainstorm the aims
- Draft a constitution (seek advice on this, as it is likely to be important to include “charitable” aims; also there are clauses which funders require to see, e.g. dissolution clause)
- Advertise your first public meeting – open to all comers. Advertise in local newspapers and distribute invitations widely, give at least 14 days notice. Elect committee members and officers and adopt the constitution formally.
- First committee meeting
 - i. Arrange to open a bank account with 2 or more signatories

- ii. Take out insurance – where applicable - for employer's liability, buildings & contents, public liability, professional indemnity, and ensure employees/volunteers have car insurance covering them for business use
 - iii. Develop policies for equal opportunities, health & safety, discipline/grievance, data protection & confidentiality
 - iv. Consider whether to co-opt onto committee e.g. key people from funders or local community
 - v. Confirm employment terms and conditions for paid staff (if applicable)
 - vi. Decide when to hold first AGM.
- Later tasks include:
 - i. Appoint independent examiner/auditor of accounts
 - ii. Consider whether to apply to Charity Commission for registration as a charity (however it may be best to delay doing this for 12/18 months, until the organisation and its aims and objectives have “settled down”)
 - iii. Hold AGM at which reports will be presented on first year's activity and accounts.
 - Remember that committee members (sometimes called Trustees) must not gain any financial benefits from the group – that's what “charitable” means. Payment for expenses necessarily incurred, e.g. travelling expenses, is acceptable but payment for services is not. (See Charity Commission regulations for exceptions to this)

2. Developing Your Group

Apart from the structural aspects considered in 2 above, you will also want to put your new group on a good footing. One or all of the following will be important:

- i. Having a clear vision and aims around which you can gather support.
- ii. Gathering support from friends and members of the community.
- iii. Getting key people in statutory agencies (e.g. Borough/District Council, Health, Social Services, Police, etc.) on your side
- iv. Finding out what other organisations (statutory, private or voluntary) provide the same or similar services and agreeing with them ways in which you can work together.
- v. Getting people onto your committee with a good mix of skills – try and have someone who works in a key statutory/voluntary organisation (or has very good links with

- statutory/voluntary organisations), someone with vision, someone good at practical details, someone good at writing.
- vi. Working out a plan of action – you can't do everything at once, and some things will have to wait while other things take priority.
 - vii. The committee working together as a team, and having an understanding of its role and responsibilities.
 - viii. Seeking funding for your first project or projects (or it may be that you can make things happen without funding, just with your own voluntary efforts)
 - ix. Setting up communications, e.g. advertising how people can contact you, and join the group, and getting a good relationship with local press and radio.
 - x. Being well organised e.g.
 - 1. Keeping notes of meetings, and copies of letters sent
 - 2. Having a filing system
 - 3. Setting up an office with filing drawers, telephone, word processor etc. even if it's at home.

3. Developing the Skills and Knowledge you need

- Some of the steps and action suggested above will require you, and your group to seek expert advice
- Other matters will give rise to training needs for you, and the committee members of your group.

This information has been produced by West Norfolk Voluntary and Community Action set up and owned by local groups to support, promote and develop local voluntary and community action.

We have taken all reasonable steps to make sure that this information is current and accurate. We cannot, however, guarantee its accuracy or completeness and therefore cannot accept liability for your acting, or failing to act, on the information given.

For resources, books, ideas and useful information please contact West Norfolk VCA or email info@westnorfolkvca.org.