

Start here: thinking about starting a new community group

Setting up a new community organisation takes energy, enthusiasm and commitment but can bring a lot of satisfaction too. Before you put in too much hard work to get your community group started, consider these preparatory steps:

1. Avoiding duplication

There are at least 700 community groups in Lewisham and competition for funding is fierce, so you need to be sure that your proposed community group will not duplicate the work of established organisations.

Rather than setting up a new group that struggles to attract resources you might achieve your aims by joining an existing group as a volunteer or management committee member. Alternatively you might want to talk to existing groups about working in partnership with them or developing a joint project.

But there is always room for community organisations that meet real needs and have viable plans for funding their work, particularly where this includes generating income rather than depending too heavily on grants and donations.

2. Do your research

Try to find out as much as you can about other groups who are already doing similar work to your proposed new community group. This might be through local contacts - such as your housing association if you are thinking of forming a residents group –by doing a Google search e.g. foodbank Lewisham or by doing some local research relevant to your area of interest.

You can find out more about groups working with particular communities in Lewisham through these organisations:

[Bromley and Lewisham MIND](#)
[Community Connections](#)
[Lewisham BME Network](#)
[Lewisham Disability Coalition](#)
[Lewisham Education Arts Network](#)
[Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network](#)
[New Cross Gate Trust](#)

Your local community centre <http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/getinvolved/community-support/Pages/Community-premises.aspx>

or library <http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/myservices/libraries/Pages/default.aspx> may also know of or host other small local groups.

Lewisham borough is split into 18 smaller areas called wards that each have a Local Assembly. Local Assemblies consult with local people about priorities for the area. They also have small grants available for projects that meet their priorities for the benefit of local residents. See <http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/getinvolved/localassemblies/Pages/default.aspx>

Lewisham Council's website includes a page dedicated to community support with links to activities in each ward. <http://www.lewisham.gov.uk/getinvolved/community-support/Pages/default.aspx> And your local councillor may be able to introduce you to groups or community activists in your area. See <http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/mgFindMember.aspx>

The Charity Commission has a searchable database of registered charities where you can search by key word or the specific name or charity number of a particular charity – but bear in mind that not all community groups are registered charities. <http://apps.charitycommission.gov.uk/showcharity/registerofcharities/RegisterHomePage.aspx>

Organisations that do complementary work with your proposed client group as well as those that do similar work but in another part of the country are also good sources of information and perhaps advice.

3. Evidence of need

Are you sure there is a need for your proposed community group? Before you get too far into setting it up you will need to gather some evidence to persuade people to support you.

You can gather evidence of need from:

- Local or national statistics and subject-specific data relevant to your project
- Doing your own surveys or consultations
- Letters of support e.g. from local schools, councillors
- Links to local area plans or other initiatives e.g. Lewisham's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) <http://www.lewishamjsna.org.uk/>

4. Other opportunities to network and meet others working in your field

We also run regular networking events and forums where you can find out more about who's doing what in Lewisham - so keep an eye on the Events section of our [homepage](#) and consider signing up for our [e-bulletins](#).

5. Other resources

<http://www.justact.org.uk/2014/12/18/top-tips-for-setting-up-and-running-a-community-organisation/>