

Start here: how to set up a new community group

If you have worked through the first Start here page and are sure about setting up a new community group the best way to start is to arrange a meeting of people who share your interest and talk with them about what you could do. You will need some of these people to join you in setting up a management committee if your group wants to be set up formally.

Consider:

- Asking people you know who have an interest in the subject – friends, neighbours, community, church, workplace
- Advertising in libraries, children's centres, on community noticeboards, in leisure centres, GP surgeries and volunteer centres
- Using social media to spread the word

1. Agreeing the purpose of your group

Once you have got people interested, you need to discuss what it is your group will do and the issue or problem you want to tackle. At this stage people may have very different ideas, so you need to listen to other people's viewpoints and see if you can come to an agreement about what it is you want to focus on.

2. Your first meeting

Arrange a public meeting to tell others what your group wants 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 or community leaders). It is up to you who you invite, but the idea is to:

- Tell others what you want to do
- Get people to sign up to join the group
- Raise your group's profile
- Get input from others about how you can develop and what the needs are

Your meeting could be a formal launch or just an informal chat over a cup of tea but make sure you record who was there and the main points of the meeting so you have a record to refer back to. At this meeting you need to recruit people to join the group's management committee. This would usually include a Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary, plus a few general committee members. The role of the management committee is to make the overall decisions about the

group and its work, and to be accountable for money, resources and the management of the group's activities. Try to recruit a diverse group of people who have enthusiasm for your cause and who can contribute a range of skills and experience.

3. Making it legal - drawing up a governing document

A governing document, or constitution, is a set of rules that all members of the group agree to abide by. It's important to have a governing document as it shows that your group is democratic and accountable. It 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 the first committee members and 'adopted'.

Your constitution will detail the group's aims and powers, how your management committee and membership will work, and how decisions will be made. You can set up a small community group with a simple constitution that can be downloaded from the Charity Commission's website [here](#).

4. Other legal structures

Other legal structures that you might consider for a new group are:

Charitable Incorporated Organisation – a type of charity that protects trustees from liabilities

Company Limited by Guarantee – a type of non-profit making company

Community Interest Company – a non-charitable legal structure for a social enterprise

These all involve either a lot more time to set up or greater responsibilities on behalf of trustees or directors and are therefore unsuitable for small or time-limited community groups. But if your group will be employing staff, taking on a lease or selling goods and services a simple constitution will not be appropriate. For more information about legal structures see

<https://knowhownonprofit.org/basics/setting-up-a-charity/legal-forms-for-non-profits-1>

5. 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](#).

6. Other resources

<https://knowhownonprofit.org/basics/setting-up-a-charity>

<https://www.gov.uk/setting-up-charity/set-up-a-charity>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-set-up-a-charity-cc21a>