

This is one of a series of factsheets produced by Community Action Norfolk for voluntary and community groups. If you would like some more support or to receive some of our other factsheets please contact the Development Team on 01362 698216.

## **Document: GF005 Starting a New Group Factsheet**

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This factsheet assumes that you are setting up a “charitable” group (These are often called voluntary and community groups). But, even if it is non-charitable, most of the points will still apply.

# Getting Started

## 1. An idea shared by several people

The life of a community or voluntary group starts with an idea. It might have come from something you were already involved in, or maybe you noticed a particular problem / need in the community.

Get together a group of people who share this idea or are interested in what you want to achieve. This is helpful because:

- Starting a group can take a lot of work and having support makes it more achievable.
- People bring different strengths and perspectives which will help you.
- Talking ideas over can help you make sure you don't miss out anything important.

## 2. Agree what your “aims / objectives” are

Aims and objectives (Sometimes called “purpose/s”) help you to focus your work and give you a clear way to share your visions with service-users, funders, and the community.

### Definitions:

- **Aims** are a statement of intent. They describe the direction your group will take and what it will do.
- **Objectives** are a specific statement about what problem your group will be resolving or what your service users will gain from your group.

The Charity Commission has examples, definitions and guidance on its website:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-write-charitable-purposes>

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If you want your group to be not-for-profit (whether or not you become a registered charity later), it is a good idea to check that your activities, aims, and objectives meet the legal definitions of “charity”. If you become a charity later, it will help to register your organisation, or if you become a different sort of not-for-profit organisation it will help to show the public benefit of your group. (See our Structures for VCSE Groups Factsheet to find out about different structures.)

You can find out more about charity definitions here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/charitable-purposes>

### 3. Research what is happening locally

To be successful, your group needs more than just a good idea.

You need to know if there is an audience for it. Can you find any evidence or reports that show that what you want to do is needed? (For example, if you were setting up a group to tackle rough sleeping and homelessness, you would look at reports showing the scale of the problem in your area and what the local policy is).

Is anyone else doing anything similar? Maybe there is a group doing something similar that you could work with. It will be harder to be successful if you are competing against similar initiatives, so thinking about working in partnership will help you to get your idea to the people who need it.

Some places to look are:

- LILY – The West Norfolk Online Directory. <http://asklily.org.uk/kb5/westnorfolk/cd/home.page>
- The Norfolk Community Directory. <https://communitydirectory.norfolk.gov.uk/>
- The HERON Website. <https://www.heron.nhs.uk/heron/Search.aspx>

### 4. Set it down in writing

A Constitution or Terms of Reference (types of governing document) helps your group be clear about your focus and helps to demonstrate that you are committed to running professionally. Almost all funders will expect you to have a governing document - even if you do not have a formal structure.

The Charity Commission provides a template “Model Constitution for a Small Charity” which is a good place to start: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/setting-up-a-charity-model-governing-documents>.

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Think about how you will manage your organisation. What roles will people have? How will you make decisions about your activities? How can people be involved in the decision-making? How often will you meet?

Decide on the group's name. Don't include any words / expressions which may cause offence. Ensure it cannot be abbreviated to anything inappropriate. Check there are no other groups or charities with a similar name by searching online.

## 5. Funding

You need to think about how you will cover your costs. Think about what costs you need to cover, these could include:

- Refreshments (For example tea and biscuits at your activities).
- Volunteer expenses such as transport costs. (See our Volunteering Factsheets for more information).
- Room / Venue hire.
- Equipment needed for your activities.

### Local sources of funding information:

- **Community Action Norfolk** - We provide help with funding from factsheets and training to get you started, carrying out funding searches and reviewing your applications to help you get the best from them to advice and guidance on putting together a funding strategy and financial policies. (See our Funding Factsheets).
- **Norfolk Community Foundation** – Are Norfolk's leading funder. They hold and manage many funds. They can provide you information and guidance about funds. <https://www.norfolkfoundation.com/>

## 6. Engaging with people and the community

Whatever the purpose of your group, it will only be successful if people know about it. Think about how you will:

- Reach your audience – the people you want to help
- Let people know your services are available.
- Share information and raise the profile of your organisation

Make sure you have a clear idea of how you want to present your group and your key messages.

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## Other Information

There is a lot to think about when you are starting a new group, to make sure you are running safely, effectively, and legally. Some points that you might find useful to consider are:

- Banking
- Insurance
- Accessibility (for your activities and for your group)
- Structures for VCSE Groups
- Volunteer roles and management

Our Development Officers can give you advice and guidance and talk you through any questions you might have. Please contact us if you would like more support.

**For resources, ideas and useful information please contact Community Action Norfolk on 01362 698216 or email [office@communityactionnorfolk.org.uk](mailto:office@communityactionnorfolk.org.uk)**

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