Can do Guide

Want to do something in your community? Myths about red tape getting in the way? Read our guide for tips on getting started...
Introduction

Every day, across the country, people get together to help each other out and create change in their communities. We can get a real sense of achievement from improving our local area and by working together we can make lasting friendships. However, every now and again, myths about risk and red tape can put a brake on the brilliant ideas that come out of those communities. We don’t think that should happen.

People in four areas across Yorkshire came together to put their ideas into action. They were brought together through JRF’s and JRHT’s ‘Neighbourhood Approaches to Loneliness Programme’, but their experiences are common to all sorts of community activity. They talked to us about the challenges they faced in getting their ideas off the ground and how they overcame them. This guide is based on these experiences. It explodes a few myths about health and safety and gives some tips on how to negotiate the potential pitfalls of community action. We don’t think it has to be difficult, in fact we know it isn’t.

This is just the beginning of your journey …
GETTING STARTED

Your community needs you...

MEETING

COME ALONG!

So there are other people bothered about the area! Have I got the nerve to just turn up at a meeting?

I’d love to get involved but what if my family don’t like it?

I’m not sure it’s aimed at people like me, especially if I have to go knocking on doors!

It’s about time someone did something. I’d love to, but will people think I’m the local busybody?

Remember

- Existing groups are likely to be delighted to see new people turning up – give them a call first if you like and feel free to take a friend along.

- If you are starting out think about where you meet as some venues can put people off. The My Community Starter* website provides an interactive guide and starter pack.

- Whatever you do some people will always have something to say about it, so you may as well do what’s right for you. It’s your life.

- It’s for you to decide what you want to do; don’t allow yourself to be rushed into doing things.

- Take the time to explain to family and friends what it’s all about; that you’ll be helping your family and community. Invite them along as well so that they can find out for themselves and don’t feel left out!

For more tips on getting started see Volunteering England* (Volunteering England is now part of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations), Volunteer Scotland*, Volunteering Wales* and Volunteer Now* for information about volunteering in Northern Ireland.

Local organisations such as the Council for Voluntary Service provide information and may help you get started.

*click the text to go to the website
DEALING WITH HEALTH & SAFETY

A film night is a nice idea but would we need all sorts of licences? Would the community centre be safe?

A pop-up café is a great idea but what about hygiene? And are kettles risky with the kids? It’s not going to be much of a café if we can’t make cakes or serve hot drinks!

I bet the first person who made a fire from rubbing two sticks together was told to put it out before someone got hurt!

We can section off a seated area for the hot drinks and remind parents to keep an eye on their children. Food hygiene isn’t rocket science. I’m sure Dave has a hygiene certificate, so can remind us of the basics.

‘Can Do’ Community Centre have been showing films. Samina will run through how they did it – she said there’s not much red tape.

Remember

- There are lots of myths about what you can and can’t do. Paperwork isn’t needed as often as you think so check out the facts before being put off.
- Talk to someone who has already had a go at what you want to do.
- Consider linking up with another local group; they may have already dealt with some of the red tape.
- Be flexible (as well as persistent!). You may need to make changes or do things in smaller steps towards achieving your main goal.
- If you provide food only occasionally, or in very limited ways, you will need only simple procedures and records.
- Insurance is useful in certain cases, for guidance see Community Matters*.

Have a look at the Volunteering Code of Practice at Volunteering England* for tips and a reminder that volunteering is not a generally risky activity.

To find out more see Community Matters* who provide information and telephone advice.

*click the text to go to the website
IN卷ING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Remember

• You can run a family fun day or parent & toddler group without having DBS checks (used to be called CRB checks).
• You can keep young people’s contact details if they are over 16 and give their consent.
• You can ask them to sign up to your Twitter feed or to your Face Book page without asking for any personal details.
• Try partnering with a local organisation that works with young people.

To find out more – your local Children’s Centre may help or go online to Preschool Learning Alliance*. For more information and guidance about DBS checks go to Disclosure & Barring Service* or call 0870 909 0811. There’s also a useful checklist at Volunteering England*.

*click the text to go to the website

It would be great to set up a playgroup, meet other parents on the estate, but I think you’d need all those checks and stuff ....?

What about a play and stay? The parents are around to keep an eye on their kids and we won’t have all the paperwork...

We could always just book one worker to do some activities with the kids, that way we’d have a bit of space to chat!

There can be a lot of regulation when it comes to working with kids ... and sometimes people will use this to try and put you off...

But there are still ways you can help parents and toddlers in your area, make friends and get support for yourself in the process.
MANAGING MONEY

Remember

- Keep a record of money coming in and going out.
- Agree who can deal with money and how they can do it.
- Have a written budget and produce regular updates on your finances.

If you’re just getting started you could ask a more established organisation to ‘hold’ funding on behalf of your group e.g. a local college, housing association or voluntary sector organisation. Your local CVS (Council for Voluntary Services) may also offer advice, training, guidelines and support.

For more tips on how to get funding and manage it easily go to Community Matters*

If you want help with managing a budget the Community Development Foundation* has a useful one page guide.

A few basic rules will help to make sure that the success of having some money to spend doesn’t turn into a headache.

It’s great that we’ve raised enough money for the youth workshops, but I struggle to manage my own money let alone the group’s!

*click the text to go to the website
GETTING INVOLVED WHEN RECEIVING WELFARE BENEFITS

Remember

• To let your benefits advisor know if you’re planning to volunteer for an organisation or get involved in running things in your local community.

• If you are volunteering for an organisation, you are allowed to have your expenses covered by that organisation.

• If your benefits advisor tells you that you cannot volunteer you can ask someone to speak to them on your behalf e.g. a worker from CAB or your local volunteer centre, or contact the Regional External Relations Manager for Jobcentre Plus.

For more information and guidance see Volunteering – while getting benefits*

It’s been great getting the fun days off the ground, now we can get going on organising a local clean-up.

I thought you could only volunteer for a few hours a week – are you sure your benefits won’t be cut?

People say that, but it’s not true! You can volunteer as many hours as you like as long as you keep to the rules for getting benefits.

Getting involved means I’m using my skills and getting more experience, I’m really enjoying it and it could help me get a job.

*click the text to go to the website
MANAGING YOUR INVOLVEMENT

I wanted to set up some local activities not become a chief executive! I’m overloaded and want to spend more time at home ....

But you’re brilliant Joe! You did a great job with the walking group. We need someone with your drive on the committee ...

It is going well and I want to sit back and enjoy it. How about encouraging Delana to join – I’m happy to talk through things with her.

Remember

- Be clear from the start how much time you have and consider any new roles carefully.
- Start off with small achievable things – it’s tempting to try to do too much too fast.
- If you are in a group make sure you are clear about what’s expected of people and what the time commitment is.
- Focus on recruiting new members on a rolling basis, so that there are other people to share the work.
- Encourage new people to help out with an event rather than starting on a committee. People can be put off by long meetings and like to be involved in activities that make a difference.

The more you do the more people will ask you to do, it’s a sign of success.

But you don’t have to take sole responsibility for the work. Share roles and jobs. Be prepared to say no!
MANAGING RISK

We’re managing risk all the time as part of day-to-day life. We just don’t call it that. It simply means that we think through:

- What could go wrong? identifying risks
- How likely is it to happen? assessing risks
- How serious would it be if it did? dealing with risks
- How can we reduce or remove the risk? How can we minimise the harm? How can we share responsibility?

If you do nothing, there’s a real risk that things won’t change!

There’s lots of information on the web about managing risk; a good starting point is Volunteering England’s Risk Toolkit*. The interactive guide My Community Starter* also has good information about health and safety.
Getting started...

- If you are thinking about volunteering but not sure where to start try the Volunteering England website at:
  http://www.volunteering.org.uk/iwanttovolunteer
Or you can look for volunteering opportunities near you at CSV: http://www.csv.org.uk/find-us-near-you
  ... or call Volunteering England on: 020 7713 6161 or CSV on: 020 7278 6601
- Contact local community organisations, for example, CAB, Volunteering bureau or Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) for information; they may also be able to offer support with getting your ideas off the ground. Click here to find your nearest centre.
  http://www.volunteering.org.uk/iwanttovolunteer
- If you are on benefits and want more information about volunteering see Volunteering – while getting benefits at:
  http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/dwp1023.pdf
  This leaflet tells you what to do if you want to volunteer whilst claiming benefits.
- If you just want to get together with your neighbours then streetparty.org.uk gives good advice and has resources to support street parties and meets. It also has a list of links to other interesting websites you might want to take a look at:
  ... or call Streets Alive Ltd. on: 0117 922 5708

Running a group...

- There is also information about setting up a community group at:
  http://www.communityhelpers.co.uk/setting-up-community-group.html
- The My Community Starter website provides an interactive guide and will create a personalised starter pack for you to download:
  http://www.mycommunitystarter.co.uk/
- There are some interesting stories about setting up community groups at:
  http://www.communitygroup.co.uk/
- If you want to find out more about managing the finance of a group you can contact Community Matters at:
  http://www.communitymatters.org.uk/content/469/Finance-and-Funding
  ... or call their dedicated phone line with advisers and information about setting up and running a group on: 0845 847 4253 Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9.30am to 1pm.
- For help with managing a budget see the Community Development Foundation's useful one page guide:
  http://communities.cdf.org.uk/how-to/getting-funding/
Busting Red Tape...

- You don’t always need insurance for an event, see this advice at: http://www.streetparty.org.uk/insurance-street-parties.aspx or call Streets Alive Ltd. on 0117 922 5708. It applies to Street Parties but is relevant to other low key neighbourhood events.

- Insurance can be useful in certain cases, Community Matters has its own insurers at: http://www.communitymatters.org.uk/content/351/Insurance
They also have a dedicated phone line with advisers and information about setting up and running a group... call 0845 847 4253 Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 9.30am to 1pm.

- The Health & Safety executive have a ‘myth busting’ section to their website where you can check out any stories you’ve heard about Health & Safety: http://www.hse.gov.uk/myth/index.htm


- The interactive guide ‘My Community Starter’ also has some good information about health and safety: http://www.mycommunitystarter.co.uk/healthandsafety.htm

Involving Children and Young People...

- For information about working with children ask your local Children’s Centre or go online at: www.pre-school.org.uk/parents/baby-and-toddler-groups... or call the Pre-school Learning Alliance on: 020 7697 2500

- UK Youth is a good starting point if you want to find a local youth association or get some general information about working with young people: http://www.ukyouth.org/about-us/our-work-with-young-people.html#.Uh9nerwezBF... or call: 02031 373810

- For more information and guidance about DBS checks go online: https://www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check/overview
Or call 0870 909 0811, they are always happy to talk through individual cases.

- There’s also a really useful check list at Volunteering England http://www.volunteering.org.uk/component/gpb/protectionandsafeguarding
There are two flow-charts on this page, one about children and one about adults, which help you to decide whether to get DBS checks.
This guide is part of a project funded by JRF’s Risk, Trust and Relationships programme. The full report will be available in January 2014.

It is based on research conducted by Meg Allen, Sarah Clement and Yvonne Prendergast from red Consultancy.

red Consultancy would like to thank community activists from Bradford Moor, Carr Estate, Denholme and New Earswick who shared their challenges and strategies for success.

Thanks also go to the NALP (Neighbourhood Approaches to Loneliness Programme) team who shared their experiences, to Nageena Khan for help with research and interpreting, and to Ilona Haslewood from JRF for her comments.

If you have further questions about this guide please contact: contact@candoguide.org.uk
Ilona Haslewood JRF Programme Manager (Policy and Research)
Tracey Robbins Programme Manager NALP

Design and illustrations by Sara Chew at Grey King
Produced by red Consultancy | Supported by JRF
red Consultancy
Tel. 0161 861 0248
info@redconsultancy.net