



How to Start a Community Group

Do you feel there's a need for a new group? Here are some basic tips on where to start.

Is a new organisation really needed?

There are several hundred different voluntary and community groups in Redbridge. They provide a huge range of different services for different groups of people. An organisation may already exist which does what you're planning to do. RedbridgeCVS staff can advise you about active groups in the area – or look through the directory of our members on our website.

If a group is already working in the area, it

can be hard to raise funds for a new group. Running an organisation is a lot of work and requires a wide range of skills. It might be better to work as part of the existing group.

Get people together

If you do decide to set up a group, you'll need to have several people involved. For example, once you have a bank account the cheques will probably need to be signed by two people. You'll probably want to set up a decision-making group like a committee.

Look at what other groups are doing

You can learn a lot from how other organisation work. Look at their websites and perhaps ask to meet them to discuss how they work. What different ways of working are there? Why did other groups make the choices they made, and which choices are right for you? What will you be able to offer that is different?

Make a plan

Be clear about what you are going to do and why.

- Why is there a need for your group?
- What will you do to change things?
- How are you different from other organisations?
- If you're going to provide services or help people, how do you know what they want from you? What difference will you make to their lives?
- What are your objectives? Where do you hope to be in a year's time? In two or three years?

Talk these issues through in detail, so that you all agree what you're going to do, and are committed to being involved. Groups often find at this stage that different people have different ideas. Reaching agreement can take some time and be stressful, but this is time well spent to start the organisation on a firm footing.

Are there any activities you can do now? Could you run a pilot project?

Is there anything you can do in the first few weeks or months, with the people and resources you already have, to get the ball rolling? Could you try some of your plans out

In this guide we talk about “community groups” – these groups are also referred to as voluntary groups or charities. Some groups are “registered charities” – registration won't apply to you if you're getting a small group off the ground. For more about registration, see our guide [How to Decide on your Legal Status](#).



Meeting the animals at Lambourne End Outdoor Centre

in practice to see how they work? If so, keep records of what you did – in particular of any success stories.

Decide how to organise your group

You might have an initial meeting, or several meetings, that are open to anyone who is interested. But usually, groups decide that a small number of people from the membership will form a committee, organising team or whatever you choose to call it. You may decide that people on the committee will have specific jobs, such as a treasurer with responsibility for any money the group has.

You may want to write a constitution for the group, a set of rules which explains things like how it's structured and how people are elected to positions. If you want to set up a bank account for the group, the bank will want to see your constitution. A model constitution for a small charity is available to download from the Charity Commission website.

Promote your work

Once you know what you are aiming to do and how you will work, and maybe clocked up a few small achievements, you need to tell people about your work – that includes the community you're trying to help, and people who will support you, such as donors or volunteers.

One of the most effective ways of promoting your group can be through social media like Facebook or Twitter – but make sure that it will reach the audience you're trying to communicate with.



In the kitchen of the Marjorie Collins Centre, run by Redbridge Multiple Sclerosis Society



Sikh Community Care Project launch their renovated day centre

RedbridgeCVS exists to support voluntary and community groups in the London Borough of Redbridge.

RedbridgeCVS is a charity which exists to support other local voluntary groups. Our services include:

- **information** about local groups, events, jobs and funding, delivered through our website, our weekly email newsletter and our bimonthly publication Community
- support with **fundraising** – our Community Fundraiser had helped local groups raise almost a million pounds.
- **training** on the topics that are really important for small groups, in small, friendly groups, with discounts the more you book
- help from Volunteer Centre Redbridge with finding **volunteers** for your group, and helping your group to work with them effectively
- **representing** voluntary groups in meetings with bodies like Redbridge Council and the NHS
- **meetings** where you can get to know other local groups and share best practice
- **advice** about the policies and procedures you need, and how to plan your work
- affordable and good-quality **room hire** and **photocopying**
- projects to help local communities improve their **health and fitness**

Join RedbridgeCVS

Membership is free: we invite all community groups to join if they are based in Redbridge or work with Redbridge people. Some of our services are only available to members, and members get a discount on fees, such as those for training or room hire.

More about RedbridgeCVS

See our website at
www.redbridgecvs.net

or ring us on
020 8553 1004



Community groups meet at RedbridgeCVS to hear from NHS managers and raise issues affecting them