



Carers' Self-Help Group Toolkit

GET SET...



This toolkit has been produced to provide practical guidance for anyone looking to set up a self-help group. We hope it will resource more people within Slough to set up local self-help groups for carers.

The toolkit is divided into 3 short sections, **On your marks...**, **Get set...**, **Go...**, and identifies 5 steps for each of the above 3 phases of starting a self-help group.

What is a self-help group?

A self-help group is a collection of people with common goals or similar concerns. The purpose of the group is to provide its members with an opportunity to connect with others in similar situations. Being part of such a group can help people like carers gain support and know that they are not alone through sharing experiences and resources, conversing with or simply listening to others.

Working together, the members of the group can identify what information or support they need and invite professionals and other organisations to help them access this. Groups can also have fun by organising social events and activities as part of their journey together





GET SET...

Develop a constitution / terms of reference ... once an initial decision to move forward with the group has been reached it is important to begin thinking about defining how the group will be structured. The most effective way of doing this is by developing a constitution or some terms of reference for the group. This simply outlines what the group has been set up to do and how it will operate and is a useful point of reference, for example, when resolving disputes about how the group should be run. Your constitution / terms of reference does not need to be more than a couple of sides of A4.

More help with developing this can be found in the factsheet **Writing your Constitution** available via the **Slough Information Library** in the **Resources for Groups** section on the SLOUGH Get Involved website – www.sloughgetinvolved.org.uk A model constitution that you could use / adapt can be found on at – www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269521/gd4text.pdf

Open a bank account ... having a bank account in the name of the group is the best way of managing the group's money. Most high street banks offer specific accounts for community groups, but will usually ask to see a copy of your group's constitution or terms of reference before opening such an account on the group's behalf. Two people will also need to act as the signatories for the account.

Create a simple budget ... self-help groups can run with very little expense, though this will depend on the purpose of the group and also on factors such as the cost of hiring the venue where the group actually meets. Usually, it is better to start small and look to develop and grow the group over time.

Before you start raising funds for the general running costs of the group or an event, you will need to know how much what you are planning to do is likely to cost. Breaking down the costs to form a simple budget will achieve this. A simple example of one way of doing this is provided below.

Budget / Cashflow Forecast								
Month:	Pre-start	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Add months..	Totals
Income – Money In = Receipts								
Grants	200							200
Membership Subscriptions			15	15	15	15		60
Donations etc.		50						50
Total Receipts	200	50	15	15	15	15		310





Expenditure – Money Out = Payments								
Venue Hire			20	20	20	20		80
Refreshments			5	5	5	5		20
Publicity		40						40
Event costs				50				50
Other, e.g. Insurance								
Total Payments		40	25	75	25	25		190
Surplus / Deficit (-)		10	-10	-60	-10	-10		120
Opening Cash Balance	0	200	210	200	140	130		0
Closing Cash Balance	200	210	200	140	130	120		120

Fundraise for the group ... once you know how much money you need to run the group, you will need to think about how you are going to raise this. There are different ways in which you could do this such as having a membership subscription, organising your own fundraising events, applying for grants or even looking to secure services in kind from local businesses.

Whichever route you decide to take will largely depend on how much money you need to raise and how many people you have to do the work. Whatever you do, it's good to try not to put all your eggs in one basket – it's much better to explore a number of different funding streams instead. Some grant-making bodies are much more likely to help if you are able to show how your group is raising some of the money itself. Don't forget to also get in touch with local businesses you may have contact with who might be able to help.

Advertise the group ... before you launch you will need to think about different ways in which you will be able to let others in the community know about the group's existence. Word of mouth is still one of the best ways of doing this. Use of social media such as Facebook and Twitter to communicate about groups, activities and events is commonplace nowadays. Try to also think about where you might find an audience that includes people who would benefit from the group. The school gate, local churches or other religious organisations are just some examples. More traditional methods of communication such as posters/leaflets/flyers can still prove effective in such contexts and are also worth adding to public noticeboards in places like supermarkets, GP practices, hospitals and local libraries.

Whatever methods you use, don't forget to think carefully about the design of your publicity. How will the messages and images you're planning to use connect with those you are looking to attract? It is also important to check (and double-check) that all of the essential information about the what, when, where, who and why of your group is included and clear on all your publicity.

