



# Carers' Self-Help Group Toolkit

Go...



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.





## GO...

**Keep appropriate records ...** once the group starts it is good practice to begin to develop some simple systems for keeping appropriate records. One area where this is important is in relation to managing the group's finances.

Having accurate accounts will help you keep track of how much is being spent on group activities. It will also enable you to better estimate how much your future plans might cost. Many groups ask one of their members to take on responsibility for managing the group's finances. However, it is still the responsibility of the group as a whole or its committee to decide how funds will be raised and utilised.

**Meet any legal requirements ...** depending on the nature of the group and its individual circumstances, it may be necessary not only to be aware of, but also adhere to various legal requirements. Two of the most common areas that may apply when running a small self-help group are public liability insurance and safeguarding, i.e. if the group supports children, young people or adults at risk.

Public liability insurance covers injury or illness and material loss or damage incurred by members of the public whilst involved with your group. Although not an absolute legal requirement, it is important that the activities of your group are covered. More information on safeguarding is contained within the **SLOUGH Small Groups Guide**, which is available via the **Slough Information Library** in the **Resources for Groups** section on the SLOUGH Get Involved website – [www.sloughgetinvolved.org.uk](http://www.sloughgetinvolved.org.uk)

**Establish ground rules ...** having some ground rules can help to establish expectations in terms of what is or isn't considered appropriate behaviour within the group and can be useful for ensuring the group runs smoothly. Some simple ground rules might be based on such things as listening to each other, respecting confidentiality, everyone taking ownership for the group and sharing responsibilities.

Ground rules are more likely to be respected if the group has been involved in drawing them up. Displaying the ground rules during meetings or giving each member of the group a copy to sign as part of the process of becoming a member of the group may also help. Ground rules can be added to or adapted as the group develops. Don't forget to let new members know about whatever ground rules the group has in place and give them an opportunity to express whether they feel these need to be added to or amended in any way.

**Create a welcoming and supportive environment ...** as word gets out about the group, others may well want to join. It's worth giving some thought beforehand, therefore, to how you will welcome and include new members. Walking into a new group can be a daunting experience so it will help your group to grow if you are able to put new members at ease. You might, for example, want to think about asking an existing member of the group to look after new people





when they join; always including a group introduction when new people are present; and asking new members whether there is anything that would make the group an even better experience for them.

**Plan the group's programme ...** in order to keep those involved in the group engaged, you will need to put together a programme covering issues and topics of personal importance to the group's members. Some simple tips for planning an effective programme include keeping it varied and interesting; involving the group in shaping the programme; and asking for volunteers from the group to help plan and facilitate the group's activities.





## CHECKLIST

Below is a simple checklist covering the key points in this toolkit. There is also space at the end for you to add your own action points to the checklist.

Things to think about...	Things to do...
Is there a group already active in the area?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research what groups already exist.</li> <li>• Visit similar groups to find out what works well.</li> </ul>
Who could you ask to help?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with professionals who may be aware of others with similar concerns.</li> <li>• Approach those people you've identified.</li> </ul>
Where, when, and how often will the group meet? Are potential venues convenient and accessible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decide on the group's purpose and frequency of meetings etc..</li> <li>• Identify suitable venues.</li> </ul>
What would you like to achieve from an initial meeting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange a planning meeting to finalise the above and decide on things like the name of the group and who can join.</li> </ul>
How will group responsibilities be shared?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form an organising group / committee.</li> </ul>
How will the group be structured?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop terms of reference.</li> </ul>
What community resources or possible sources of financial support are available?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open a bank account.</li> <li>• Create a simple budget.</li> <li>• Fundraise, apply for funding etc..</li> </ul>
How will you advertise the group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organise publicity.</li> </ul>
What admin procedures need to be put in place?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create simple systems for keeping appropriate records.</li> </ul>
What legal requirements need to be met?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange public liability / other insurance as necessary.</li> </ul>
How will you welcome and include new members?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish clear ground rules.</li> <li>• Integrate practices that set the right tone for the group.</li> </ul>
Is your programme relevant to the group's members?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get regular feedback from those involved in the group.</li> <li>• Change and adapt as necessary.</li> </ul>

