



How to set up a volunteer group

Volunteering is a great way to help your local community. Although local people often carry out good work in their community without the need for a formal organisation, some projects and activities require a structure to function safely and efficiently. A volunteer group can enable these kinds of activities to take place. Across Bridgend, there are lots of volunteer groups which come in all shapes and sizes and operate for a wide variety of purposes, such as:

- + **Bridgend Volunteer Community Cleanup** – community litter picking project that currently has groups in 5 different areas of Bridgend county
- + **Bryngarw Park Volunteer Group** – assist the park rangers with maintaining and promoting Bryngarw Country Park
- + **Lapwing Champions** – help the Wildlife Trust of South and West Wales carry out conservation work at Parc Slip to improve the habitat for Lapwings, a farmland bird that has declined due to habitat loss

This guide will provide some information about how to set up a new volunteer group, as well as provide links to more in-depth resources. But first some definitions:

What is a volunteer group?

- + A group run on a 'not for profit' basis
- + A group that provides social or environmental benefits
- + A group where there is more than one person involved in running the group





10 easy steps to setting up a new volunteer group

1 Identify the purpose of the group

- Why do you need a volunteer group?
- What would the group do?
- Where will the group volunteer?

2 Find out if anyone else is already doing what you would like to do

- Are there existing groups doing similar work in your area?
- Is there a group you could work in partnership with?

3 Build a team

Find other people to help set the group up as it is difficult to run a volunteer group alone. The group leaders will be responsible for various things including:

- determining how the group is organised
- determining how the group can achieve its objectives
- arranging volunteer sessions, administration etc.

4 Identify a name for the volunteer group

It is important not to pick a name that is the same as or too similar to another volunteer group. The name should be:

- memorable
- attract volunteers
- reflect the purpose of the group

5 Select some goals for your group to achieve and write a mission statement

Examples could include:

- tidying up a specific area
- identifying areas that the local community would like improving etc.

6 Become a constituted group

- Form a committee. You will need to elect a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer
- Develop a constitution
- Set up a bank account
- Choose a legal structure for your group. There are a number to choose from depending on what the groups plans to do. Many local volunteer groups will register as an unincorporated organisation as it is quick and cheap to set up and ideal for small groups with small membership, short term goals and low incomes.

To find out more about the different structures available visit the Charity Commission website.



7 Design promotional materials and advertise the volunteer group in order to recruit volunteer members

- Consider where and how you will advertise the group
- Make sure your group is inclusive – not everyone can access information digitally so consider multiple methods of advertising

8 Identify the risks associated with the volunteer group and how to manage them, as well as potential barriers to volunteering

- **Health and safety** – there may be physical risks to volunteers and/or the people they are working with and supporting. These risks need to be assessed and controlled through appropriate measures. For an example, please see BAVO's Risk Assessment Form. Also useful is our resource on How to maintain health and hygiene in outdoor volunteering
- **Safeguarding** – volunteers may be working with children or vulnerable adults
- **Finances** – how will you finance your volunteer group, e.g. buy equipment, and account for any volunteer costs
- **Accessibility and inclusivity** – People attend volunteering sessions for all sorts of reasons so you have to consider how to reduce barriers to accessing volunteering opportunities. Some people might not feel confident attending a volunteering session on their own for the first time. Why not implement a buddy system to make new volunteers feel welcome in a group? Why not have a 'meet and greeter' at sessions to help welcome new members and answer enquiries from members of the public



9 Arrange insurance for your volunteer group

- **Keep Wales Tidy** have a Community Group Insurance Scheme for constituted groups carrying out environmental work

10 Get your volunteering sessions underway

- Volunteer groups are a great way to make a huge difference within a local community. They are a great opportunity for people to learn new skills, meet people and most importantly have fun.

Further information

For more information on volunteering and setting up a volunteer group, check out the following resources:

- + **Bridgend Association of Voluntary Organisations (BAVO)** – BAVO's purpose is to support, encourage and promote the development of the voluntary and community sector in Bridgend County Borough. BAVO can help with setting up volunteer groups, writing constitutions, volunteer policies and much more.
- + **Bridgend Volunteer Network** – countryside volunteering opportunities and events all year long.
- + **Volunteering Wales** – this volunteering platform is free for volunteers to register an interest to volunteer and for organisations to register their volunteer opportunities in Bridgend.
- + **Charity Commission for England and Wales** – registers and regulates charities in England and Wales to ensure that the public can support charities with confidence.