



STARTING UP A NEW GROUP IN MIDLOTHIAN:

Guide 1 - Getting Started

Midlothian Voluntary Action

March 2005 – revised August 2007

STARTING UP A NEW GROUP IN MIDLOTHIAN: Guide 1 - Getting Started

CONTENTS

Section		Page
1.	Introduction	3
2.	Is a new Group needed?	3
3.	Is a new Group wanted?	3
4.	The First Steps	4
5.	What Now?	5
Appendix 1	Sources of Help, Advice and Information in Midlothian	6

1. Introduction

Voluntary sector organisations do not suddenly appear, fully fledged, with premises, membership, funding and staff.

Most, if not all, started because a group of people got together “to do something”, for example, The Action Group grew out of a group of parents of children and adults with a learning difficulty, and the Woodburn Day Care Club was started by local people to fill a need for day care for local older people. More recently, the Woodburn Nursery and Playgroup was formed by local parents when the local nursery closed down.

You might feel that YOU will never manage to start a group or an organisation, but – taken one step at a time – it can be done!

This is the first of a small series of Guides being produced by Midlothian Voluntary Action to help you in Getting Started and Keeping Going.

2. Is a new Group needed?

Before you start up a new group – check out what is available locally. There may be an existing group that will do/provide exactly what you are looking for. Check out with your local Council for Voluntary Service, Midlothian Voluntary Action (MVA); your local Community Learning and Development Workers; and/or in your local Library. See *Appendix 1 for contact details, also Appendix 3 for searchable websites.*

3. Is a new Group wanted?

If there are no suitable groups/organisations nearby and you decide to start a group, you need people. Some groups are started up by friends, neighbours, or users of a facility – these are probably easier to get started as you have a ready made pool of possible members. Others are started by an individual with a bright idea who advertises for like-minded people to join in.

A good start would be to arrange a meeting in a suitable venue, for example, a room in your local community centre, school, or church.

If you want to attract people from a particular community, for example, Woodburn or Mayfield, I would suggest one or more of the following:

- in your local newspaper, for example, the Advertiser;
- putting posters in local public premises, for example, your local library, community centre, leisure centre, GP surgery, Miners Welfare, as appropriate;
- the Midlothian Online website (www.midlothian.org);
- through Midlothian Voluntary Action and/or Volunteering First (Midlothian);

If you want to attract people from a wider geographic area (for example, the whole of Midlothian) who are interested in the one subject, you could try the suggestions above, but spread to all the local libraries, community centres etc. If you are trying to reach people with a medical condition, you could try distributing flyers to GP practices; and speak to Health Visitors and/or other health professionals.

4. **The First Steps**

- **Arrange a meeting** – three or four week’s notice is probably a good length of time – enough time to spread the word, not long enough to forget it.
- **Choose your date and time carefully** – for example, if you want to start up a Youth Football Club, if possible, don’t pick the night a Scottish team is playing in a major televised match! It sounds obvious, but it is easy to do when trying to arrange a suitable date.
- **Choose your venue** – it should be easily reachable by public transport, and have parking nearby.
- **Try to get an accessible venue** – you do not want to put off valuable members by choosing a room they cannot reach. There are not that many fully accessible venues in Midlothian, but there are some very good ones.
- **Finding a venue** - try your local community centre, Miner's Welfare, school or church - one of these might have just the room you are looking for - for a price you can afford. Also try asking your local Community Education worker and Midlothian Voluntary Action.
- **Make sure you publicise meeting widely enough** - If you are just wanting to start up a small group, for example, a Mum’s group, word of mouth at your local playgroup may be all you want. On the other hand, if you want to campaign against something/or for something, you might want as many of the neighbourhood as possible.
- **Preparation** - Make sure the venue is suitably heated, that there are plenty of chairs and the toilets have been opened and are working (very important!).

If you hope for large numbers, ask about use of a microphone. Also, if possible, arrange for use of a loop system for the use of people wearing a hearing aid.

If possible, and you can afford it, arrange for teas and coffees – a lot of networking can be done over a cup of tea at the end of the formal meeting.

Signpost meeting room, especially if it is a big venue.

- **Running the Meeting -**

Information on how to organise and run a meeting is available from MVA, including a selection of books that you can have a look at.

The basics are:

- Decide who will chair the meeting.
- Type up a simple agenda and make sure there are plenty copies of it and any other papers.
- Include time for questions in the agenda.
- Make sure room is laid out suitably - for example, if a small meeting - chairs round a central table; if a large meeting - theatre style. It is not a good idea to leave chairs bar style round lots of small tables as some people will be facing away from the speaker.
- At the beginning of the meeting, do the 'housekeeping', that is tell people where the fire exits and toilets are. Also, how long the meeting is likely to go on for.
- If a small meeting, ask people to say who they are at the beginning. If a large meeting, ask people to give their name (and organisation if relevant) when they ask a question.
- Keep to the agenda but make sure there is enough time for questions.
- At the end, summarise decisions (if any).
- Thank everybody for attending and say what the next stage will be - for example, the setting up of a Steering Group to take the group further.

5. What Now?

Lots of folk (or at least, enough people) want to join – what now?

This depends on the type of group you want to run. If you just want to set up a simple special interest group that does not need equipment, for example, a Book Group, you might decide to keep everything casual and informal. Your local Community Learning Development Worker may be able to help you find premises and get you going – they may even be able to provide you with a small grant (check this out).

However, for most groups, it would be better to set up a more formal structure. Midlothian Voluntary Action will be able to give you assistance on structures, constitutions, charitable status, committees, insurance and lots more. We can also help you look for funding.

Sources of Advice and Information

All voluntary organisations and community groups

- **Midlothian Voluntary Action (MVA)** - the local Council for Voluntary Service set up to serve the needs of the local voluntary sector throughout Midlothian. Services include Advice, Information, Training, and Funding Support.

4/6 White Hart Street
 Dalkeith EH22 1AE
 Tel/Fax: 0131 663 9471
 Email: info@mvacvs.org.uk
 Website: www.mvacvs.org.uk
- **Midlothian Community Learning and Development** – see Midlothian Council's website www.midlothian.gov.uk (Learning & Libraries).
- **Midlothian Regeneration Development Team** can support voluntary organisations to apply for funding, to make links with Midlothian Council, and with many other issues. They also run a programme of small grants for voluntary organisations that are addressing issues of poverty and social exclusion in Midlothian.

Regeneration Development Team
 Tel 0131 271 3199
 email: dorothy.wright@midlothian.gov.uk

All groups run by, or using, volunteers

- **Volunteering First (Midlothian)** - the local volunteer centre – provides advice, information, training and support on all aspects of volunteering in Midlothian, including the Disclosure process for volunteers/staff members working with children and young people, and vulnerable adults.

Unit 18, Hardengreen Business Centre, Dalhousie Road,
 Dalkeith, EH22 3NX, Tel: 0131 663 6165
 Email: mail@volunteeringfirst.com
 Website: www.volunteeringfirst.com

Children's Organisations

- **Midlothian Association of Play (MAP)** – MAP is a voluntary organisation supporting Children's work in Midlothian. They provide support, training, advice, information and access to a resource base of their affiliated groups that work with children 0-16 years. Membership is open to groups that provide play opportunity to children, including playschemes, playgroups, after school clubs and play projects.

MAP, c/o Room 12, Greenhall Centre, Gowkshill, Gorebridge,
EH23 4PE, Tel: 01875 823846
Email: map.greenhall@virgin.net

- **Lothian Association of Play (LAYC)** – LAYC is a voluntary organisation which can support, and give information, to groups wanting to set up youth clubs, children's groups etc in Lothian. They also offer an insurance package to affiliated groups.

LAYC, Dunford House, 7 Boroughloch Lane, Edinburgh
Tel: 0131 667 1828, Fax: 0131 667 9862
Email: enquiries@layc.org.uk
Website: www.layc.org.uk

Further information is available in "Sources of Information – New Group", which is available on the MVA website www.mvacvs.org.uk (New Group) or from margaret.nisbet@mvacvs.org.uk.

Midlothian Voluntary Action, 4/6 White Hart Street, Dalkeith, Midlothian, EH22 1AE
Tel/Fax: 0131 663 9471, E-mail: info@mvacvs.org.uk
Website: www.mvacvs.org.uk