



## Starting your own Streets Group – TOP TIPS FROM CURRENT GROUPS

The initiators from the pilot phase of Transition Streets in St Albans have shared their experiences and offered some tips about recruiting neighbours and getting Streets groups started. They hope that this might be helpful for new groups starting-up now.

### Ways of recruiting neighbours and other members of the local community

The initiators have all adopted slightly different approaches to recruiting neighbours or other local people based on their knowledge of their community and its residents. Their approaches have included:

- Knocking on the doors of all neighbours in both directions.
- Contacting neighbouring householders by email.
- Talking to the local groups, like the Preservation Society.
- Leafleting the whole street using the Transition Streets leaflet with the name and contact details of the initiator included. People were invited to come to an informal meeting at the initiator's house to find out more.
- Doing a second leaflet with the planned date of the first meeting. Each round of publicity generated interest from a small number of people.

### Recruiting people – some ideas to think about

Each street or small community is individual and different; what works in one area may not work in another. Some initiators used the Transition Streets leaflet; others did not, relying more on personal contact. Between them they offered these reflections on their experiences of recruiting people:

- Inviting people to a 'no obligation to join' preliminary meeting with refreshments helps
- Showing a short video at a preliminary meeting can provide a useful focus
- The initiator's own enthusiasm for Transition Streets is crucial
- It is important that initiators have a good understanding of the overall aims of Transition – just reading the work book is not enough
- It helps if the initiator knows how many people they are aiming to recruit (this may partly be determined by the size of likely meeting spaces)
- Setting a deadline by which things have to be done helps, e.g. arranging a date for a preliminary social meeting means that the leafleting has to be done by then
- Having some people involved who you already know, who support what you are doing, is useful and helps give you confidence

- Talking to people face to face is important – and they will talk to other people; word of mouth is a crucial aspect of recruitment
- It is important to include people you don't know already
- There is, however, no obligation to invite people who may cause problems with group dynamics and the smooth running of the group
- You need to accept that you can't persuade everyone about the issues and the need to change behaviour
- You need to be persistent – it takes time and often more than one contact to get people involved

Once the group is formed

The initiators from the pilot streets offered these thoughts about what has helped their groups get going and maintain their enthusiasm for meeting:

- The group develops its own flow; there is no one right way of operating and structuring meetings (beyond the focus of working through the Streets workbook)
- Once people have decided they want to form / join a group, it helps maintain momentum if the first session with the work book can take place fairly soon
- Timing / frequency of meeting – some groups have met fortnightly, but most meet monthly. The frequency needs to be determined by the needs of the group, while balancing the needs both of maintaining momentum and having time to take actions between meetings.
- Arranging meetings – some groups set their whole meeting schedule at the first meeting; others do it meeting by meeting, depending on what suits them best.
- E mail reminders in between meetings are useful in maintaining group cohesion.
- Sharing out roles, e.g. hosting, facilitating, note-taking (some groups take notes, others do not) helps share responsibility.
- The initiator does not lead ever meeting. Although they have felt a sense of responsibility for their groups, they have tried to hold back and encourage others to take responsibility for aspects of running the group.
- It is important to be persistent; don't get disheartened; take small steps and enjoy taking them.
- Support from Catherine as Project Co-ordinator is invaluable. Meeting with other initiators also provides much valued support, helps with dealing with any stress associated with being an initiator and with sharing ideas, experiences and information.

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