

Running successful group activities

What is this resource for?

This resource is designed to help you to plan and run successful group activities and meetings, which meet the needs of your members and keep them coming back.

Planning your group programme

Your members will have different needs and motivations for joining the group. The motivations of individuals for being in a group will also change over a period of time. For example a person might join the group to find out more about diabetes but may stay involved to have frequent contact with others who have the same condition.

Organising a diverse programme of activities is important to help meet the different needs of members as they change over time. Activities can range from meetings with speakers to practical sessions on healthy cooking, social activities and outings.

You can use the *planning template* on the *local groups portal* to help you plan a varied programme of events. You will also find *template programme leaflets* to help you advertise this programme to your members.

A welcoming environment and creating a community

As well as creating a diverse programme for your members it is important to ensure that they feel comfortable and involved in the group to encourage them to keep coming back. New members should feel welcome and the group should feel like a community where members can belong.

Top tips for making new members feel welcome

- **Welcome them before the meeting** – Contact people before their first meeting to offer the opportunity to ask questions and give them information about the group and meeting. It is a great idea to create a welcome pack to send to new members. You will find a *Template Welcome pack* on the *Local Groups Portal*
- **Everyone should welcome new members** – Ensure that all members take responsibility for being friendly and welcoming new people to the group at meetings
- **Have a Welcome Team**- Have a few group members assigned to look out for new members, welcome them and ensure they are comfortable throughout the meeting by offering refreshments and engaging them in conversation about what they would like to get from the group. Ensure people who are comfortable with welcoming and small talk are on this team.

- **Create informal space** – Even when your meeting has a set agenda and speaker make sure you create space for informal mingling and to welcome people at the beginning of the meeting.

Top tips for creating a sense of belonging

If people feel they belong they will come back to meetings time and time again. It is important to develop the initial welcoming and relationships into a community - a group of people who feel they belong.

Being a member does not instantly mean people will have a sense of belonging. Here are some tips to help ensure members are engaged and feel that they belong.

- **Involve members in planning and running meetings-** ask group members to help plan and set up your activities. This could be asking someone with design skills to create a flyer for a meeting or asking them to take on small tasks to set up a meeting or activity space, such as set out chairs
- **Ask members what they want** – Use informal space at the start of meetings to talk to members about what they want. You can also initiate a brief discussion at the end of the activity or use a brief evaluation form - see the *Local Groups Portal* for an example evaluation form. Why not introduce an ideas box at meetings for members to drop in suggestions.
- **Listen to your members-** Ensure you respond to feedback on the activities people would like to see and be clear on how you are responding to this

Working with Speakers

Many groups invite speakers to talk at their meetings. Speakers will have something interesting and informative to offer your group and give members an incentive to attend. You can invite Health Care Professionals who cover your area such as:

- Diabetes Specialist Nurses
- Dieticians
- Consultants

See the resource on *Working with Healthcare professionals* on the *Local Groups Portal*. Your local Diabetes UK office may be able to send someone to speak at your group meetings.

When working with speakers ensure that you

- **Confirm the time, date, location and agree with them what they will speak about.**
- **Ensure they have information about the group**
- **Ask for background information** to help you introduce them to the group
- **Reconfirm** close to the meeting date and ensure they know how to reach the venue.