

Starting Your Group

Starting a group can seem daunting. There might only be you – or there might only be two or three of you. Don't panic - most of our groups have started from such numbers and this document will help you work out a way forward – so you are already in the right place and doing the right thing!

First steps...

Below is a fairly typical progression that many of our groups have gone through but it must be stressed that it is only a model. Conditions will vary from area to area and it may be possible that groups can skip certain steps or come up with their own distinct path.

STEP 1. A person from the core group (or the sole person involved) contacts Bill Kerry bill.kerry@equalitytrust.org.uk at The Equality Trust (TET) to ask for some initial advice.
STEP 2. At this point please read the additional notes on “Recommendations for assembling your core group” at the end of this document. THIS IS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED!
STEP 3. Assuming a core group comes together they then start to meet in someone's home or a café or a pub – or maybe a community centre or a church hall.
STEP 4. The core group continues to meet and develops its plans, gets to know each other better and grows in confidence. During this period it is quite common for a group to think about issues such as setting up a website, drafting a simple constitution and whether it wants a bank account and to have officers, eg: Chair, Treasurer, Secretary etc...
STEP 5. The core group (hopefully slightly larger by now) decides to name the date for a public meeting at which to launch the group. Typically, this involves some or all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - setting a date, say 3 months away, to allow time for planning and publicity - inviting speakers (from the local area, from TET or from other TET-affiliated local groups) - drafting a simple publicity leaflet to promote the meeting in the local area - booking the venue and attending to all the logistics (audio-visuals, any catering etc) - alerting the local media - inviting local MPs and Councillors - inviting other potentially sympathetic organisations such as faith groups, local campaign groups, food banks, trade unions, co-ops, community groups and so on.
STEP 6. Hold your public meeting and launch the group!

What help does TET provide along the way?

TET provides the following support to the affiliated local groups:

* A dedicated Supporter & Local Groups Manager – Bill Kerry – who can be contacted at bill.kerry@equalitytrust.org.uk or via the office on 020 3637 0324 (please leave a message);

* Advice and guidance on running and growing a group, persuading decision-makers, organising events, working with media etc. This includes putting you in contact with other groups that have done these things before;

* Targeted postcode mailings to those people in our database that live in your area to help you grow your core group of activists;

- * Regular opportunities to support and get involved with TET campaigns;
- * End of month bulletins including news from the affiliated groups and all the latest news and research relating to inequality;
- * Regular opportunities to meet up with the other affiliated groups in the UK;
- * Varied means of connecting with the other affiliated groups in the UK as follows:
 - Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/LocalEqualityGroups/>
 - Slack (forum) <https://localequalitygroups.slack.com/>

And don't forget the TET national facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/equalitytrust> and twitter feed <https://twitter.com/equalitytrust>

* A regional support network where we allocate your group to one of the following regions designed to encourage connection and sharing between neighbouring and not-too-distant groups: Wales & West, Scotland & Borders, North, Midlands & East, London & South.

Some other useful information

TET encourages the use of community and social movement organising principles as expounded by the likes of Saul Alinsky http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saul_Alinsky and Marshall Ganz http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marshall_Ganz . Community and social movement organising has spawned a vast literature but it can, perhaps, be summed up in a question: ***How do we use the assets and resources we have, to get the assets and resources we need, in order to make the changes we want to see in the world?***

At the core of this model is the question of how we connect to other people and the power of personal stories in achieving those connections. TET can provide resources to help your group learn and implement these powerful, tried and tested techniques. We strongly recommend you contact Bill Kerry at bill.kerry@equalitytrust.org.uk to find out more...

And finally: keep it fun, social and welcoming as well as open and democratic...

Tackling inequality is a serious business but it cannot be stressed enough that your group should think of ways to make its work fun and sociable (also, what often keeps people involved is the social bonds they build up with others). Otherwise, people will very likely drift away and energy will dissipate. So, try to meet at different places, do some things that are purely social like having a summer picnic and a festive social - or have a meal out now and again or make all your meetings part-business, part-social.

Also, groups should always be as open and welcoming as possible to new members. Make sure anyone new who comes along to your meetings is warmly welcomed and quickly informed about the group's plans - and remember to ask them for their views and how they might want to be involved in the work of the group? Take time to find out about people's interests, skills and motivations and, based on these, invite them to take on tasks (however great or small) that best suit them and that they will enjoy. It will not always be possible to accommodate everyone's wishes so it's important to rotate responsibilities and make sure that offices such as Chair, Treasurer, Secretary etc... are elected on at least an annual basis.

Appendix: Recommendations for assembling your core group

1. Decide on an outline idea of what the group is about

You will need this to explain to others why they should become involved and to get them enthused about it. It may help to try writing down answers to the following three questions:

- 1.1)** What is the issue? (i.e. the reasons to be concerned about inequality. This may include the scale of inequality in the UK, what effect inequality has on society, why this bothers you, grounds for hope of change – see <http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/about-inequality> for more information);
- 1.2)** What is the group for? (eg: “to persuade local government, employers and other decision-makers in your area to adopt policies and practice that reduce inequality; to spread awareness among people in your area of the scale and effects of economic inequality”); and
- 1.3)** What sorts of activity do you think the group could usefully be involved in to achieve the above?

2. If possible, ask other people you already know to help you

This could be in any capacity, from organising to just spreading the word to people they know. The ‘outline idea’ (above) will be useful for this as will the personal narrative that we mention above. Please contact bill.kerry@equalitytrust.org.uk for more details.

3. Promote the group to a broader group of “founders”:

- 3.1)** Through people you know and the people they know – especially if they have the answers to the three questions in their mind;
- 3.2)** Through other groups in your area who may have members that may also be interested eg: faith groups, issues groups, trades union branches, political party branches (but be careful not to be seen to be aligned with any one of them); and
- 3.3)** Through any local social media groups or noticeboards – invite people to planning meetings (remember to give enough notice!) and add names and contact details to your list of interested people. Remember, some people will want to be involved but may not be able to make a specific meeting (or may not want to go to any meeting – but still want to play a role by contributing ideas, giving advice etc).

4. Some important early considerations for the core group

- 4.1)** Is the group happy to affiliate to TET by agreeing to its Twelve Principles of Affiliation and therefore to provide one or more people’s contact details to TET?
 - 4.2)** Is everyone happy with the ‘outline idea’ for the group? Do they want to amend it?
 - * does it engage the interests, passions and priorities of your group’s members?
 - * does it cover the major issues relating to economic inequality in your area?
 - * does it support the current TET strategy?
 - 4.3)** Is there an outline draft plan for the group, so that people coming to initial meeting will have an idea of what they are getting involved in (eg: public meetings on aspects of inequality, commenting to local media on relationship of inequality to local issues, engaging to persuade the local council to adopt a maximum pay ratio)? TET can offer advice here on what other groups have done.
 - 4.4)** What skills does the group think it needs?
 - 4.5)** Planning the launch meeting – will you need a draw (eg: a film show, or a high-profile guest)?; how do you explain and enthuse people about the outline idea of what the group is about?; and how do you convince people that they should get involved and that their help will be useful? NB: You will need to get people’s contact details at the event.
-