Acknowledgements

This guide is a community initiative developed by the residents of Melody's Court Galway & the Community Support Worker and Manager of Senior Support Services from COPE Galway. We wish to thank Age & Opportunity whose support enabled us to make this initiative possible.

Keeping Connected

Supporting Older People to Access Resources for Community Groups

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Volunteer Centres

Carlow (059) 91730331	**Louth** (041) 9806900
Clare (065) 6866800	**Mayo** (096) 71444
Cork (021) 4396510	**Meath** (046) 9280790
Dublin City South (01) 4737482	**Monaghan** (047) 72191
Dun Laoighaire/Rathdown info@volunteerdlr.ie	**Offaly** (057) 9352467
Donegal (074) 9126740	**Sligo** (071) 9111042
Dublin County (01) 4628558	**Tipperary** (052) 7443407
Dublin City North (01) 8722622	**Westmeath** (044) 9348571
Galway (091) 539930	**Wicklow** (01) 2040885
Kerry (066) 7117966	**Kildare** (045) 449156
Limerick (085) 7103557	**Longford** (087) 2915367
Fingal (01) 8209550	

Vocational Education Committees

Carlow (059) 9138587	**Longford** (043) 3334000
Cavan (049) 4331044	**Louth** (042) 9334047
Clare (065) 6828107	**Mayo** (094) 9024188
Cork (021) 4273377	**Meath** (046) 9068200
Donegal (074)9161600	**Monaghan** (047) 30888
Dublin (01) 6880614	**Offaly** (057) 9349400
City of Galway (091) 549400 **Galway County** (091) 874260	**Roscommon** (090) 6626151
Kerry (066) 7121488	**Sligo** (071) 9145025
Kildare (045) 988000	**Tipperary** (067) 31250
Kilkenny (056) 7770966	**Waterford** (051) 874007
Limerick (061) 442100	**Westmeath** (044) 9348389
Laois (057) 8621352	**Wicklow** (0404) 60500
Leitrim (071) 9620024	**Wexford** (053) 9123799

Welcome to our *Keeping Connected* Guide!

Melody's Court is a small local authority estate in Galway City. We moved in here in 2001 and have been working hard to ensure our community is a place where all residents feel included and that we increase opportunities to promote healthy ageing and reduce the risk of isolation. As we age we recognise the importance of keeping involved in activities and having opportunities to meet neighbours and make new friends. Since 2009 we have been working with a community worker from COPE Galway, a local charity. The focus of our relationship with the community worker has always been on supporting us to create a community that promotes positive ageing and provides opportunities to link with other groups and organisations, to learn new skills and to get together and support one another. This year we applied for funding from Age & Opportunity to put together a guide to share with other groups what we have learned about the resources out there in the community through our involvement with COPE Galway.

We hope our guide is helpful to your group and remember - *Keep your Community Connected!* There's lots of support out there!

Les Hunt

Chairperson, Melody's Court Residents Group.

September 2012

Getting Started – How to set up a Residents' Group

Introduction

All it takes is a small number of committed residents to get a group up and running; the important thing is that members are willing to share jobs, support each other and encourage others to get involved. It can be difficult at the beginning to *get things going* but small steps will help build confidence and enable residents to see the benefits of coming together.

In this section we give some tips about how to set up as a residents' group and we also provide links to other organisations that can provide assistance and information. On page 27 we provide a calendar template that we use to let people know what's going on in our community. It's all about participation!

First of all: what is a residents' group?

It's a group of local residents who come together and represent the interests of people living in a local estate, community or area. People get together because they want to be involved in making their community a better place to live in. Groups cannot discriminate against members of the community because of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller community.

City and County Councils

Carlow (059) 9170386	**Longford** (043) 3343441
Cavan (049) 4378620	**Louth** (042) 9335457
Clare (065) 6821616	**Meath** (046) 9021581
Cork (021) 4924472	**Mayo** (094) 9047307
Donegal (074) 9172206	**Monaghan** (047) 30546
South Dublin (01) 4149000 **Dun Laoghaire Rathdown** (01) 2054700 **Fingal** (01) 890 5000	**Offaly** (0506) 46800
Galway County (091)568151 **Galway City** (091) 536400	**Roscommon** (090) 6637100
Kerry (066) 7183826	**Sligo** (071) 9111019
Kildare (045) 980721	**Tipperary** (067) 33134
Kilkenny (056) 7794115	**Waterford** (051) 849741
Limerick (061) 407323	**Wicklow** (0404) 20177
Laois (0502) 64242	**Westmeath** (044) 32154
Leitrim (078) 50464	**Wexford** (053) 42211

Useful Numbers

Organisation /Group	Contact number
Age & Opportunity	(01) 8057709
Age Action Care & Repair:	Galway (091) 527831 Dublin (01) 4756989 Cork (021) 5436554
Bealtaine	(01) 8057709
Community Foundation for Ireland	(01) 8747354
Community Knowledge Initiative (CKI) (In NUI Galway)	(091) 495234
COPE Galway Senior Support Services	(091) 778750
Macra na Feirme	(01) 4268900

Who can set up a residents' group?

All it takes is three or more people to set up a residents' group. Often the local city or county council will help residents to set up and can provide support and information about the benefits (see useful numbers section for contact details). Residents' groups can be organised by people who own or rent their homes.

From our experience we have found that to be effective a group should be Democratic, Representative and Responsible.

Step 1:

Find out who is interested in starting a group by talking to your neighbours and asking them to talk to others. Put up posters inviting residents to come to a meeting to talk about the benefits of having a residents' group. Pick a day/time that will suit the majority of people; it can be difficult to get a time that suits everyone and this can be time consuming to organise! You will need somewhere to meet and depending on the size of your potential group this may be a local sport or church hall or a community centre. If your group is small someone's house may be an option. Ensure that the venue is accessible for wheelchairs & that it is a place where people will feel comfortable going to. Teas & coffees are always welcome and help to create a relaxed environment and you could ask people for a small contribution to cover the costs. The important thing is to get together!

Step 2:

Your first meeting is important as it may be the first time that people have come together as a group. With your neighbours who are interested in helping, put together an agenda of the things to be talked about. This could include:

♦ Having a discussion about the benefits of setting up a residents group,

♦ Outlining what sort of things the group could do (work collectively to improve the community, access funding for activities, tackle issues such as litter, anti-social behaviour),

♦ Explaining the different roles that are involved (chairperson, secretary and treasurer),

♦ Discussing when, where and how often to meet,

♦ Ask your neighbours to vote if they want a residents' group or even just to meet again!

It could take a few meetings until people are willing to commit to attending or having a role. *Be Prepared & Be Patient!*

Melody's Court Sample Calendar

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
		1	2 Tea @ 3 Residents Meeting @7.30	3 Tea dance	4	5
6	7 Tea @ 11 Art @ 12	8 Beginners Tai Chi class	9 Tea @ 3	10 Lunch Club	11	12
13 Computer classes All welcome	14 Tea @ 11 Art @ 12	15 Trip to Limerick	16 Tea @ 3	17	18	19
20	21 Tea @ 11 Art @ 12	22	23 Tea @ 3	24	25 Night out	26
27 Computer classes All welcome	28 Art @ 12 Tea @ 11	29	30 Estate clean up! Bring your wellies!			

COPE Galway Community Support Project

In 2009 COPE Galway approached a number of communities of older people in the city to explore if we could work with them to support independent living, positive ageing with an overall objective of reducing the risk of isolation. We envisaged a project that would be led by older people and would support them individually and collectively to address issues that they identified and to enable them to access a range of resources in the local area. We have been working together with the residents in Melody's Court over the last four years. Our community worker supports older residents through the organisation of activities, grant applications, classes and outings. One-to-one work is focused on practical supports such as advocacy, form filling, information sourcing and referral to health and welfare supports.

The community worker is also involved in setting up lunch clubs around Galway city and is working with a number of community groups to expand this initiative. These clubs provide opportunities for older people to come together over good food, meet with neighbours, and make new friends. Clubs also provide activities, music and dancing as part of this social gathering.

We have learned a lot through our work with the residents in Melody's Court and hope that this guide provides some useful tips and ideas for your community group.

Setting up a Formal Committee

An informal group of local residents might decide to establish as a more formal committee. There are a number of advantages to this; often a formal committee can apply for small grants from your local council or organisations such as the VEC (*Vocational Education Committee*). Having a committee can also present a stronger voice for the wider group, assist the group to remain focused and get things done!

A committee could have the following positions:

Chairperson

The chairperson is there to:

- ♦ Guide the group, facilitate the meetings, ensure that everyone in the group is included and encouraged to participate.

- ♦ Ensure that the group achieves what it wants to achieve and that the issues important to the community are the things that are followed up on.

- ♦ Support members to participate and have a voice.

Secretary

The secretary gets things organised and will:

♦ Organise meetings and let everyone know when and where they are on.

♦ Help the chairperson to put an agenda together.

♦ Take the minutes if needed.

♦ Write letters on behalf of the group.

♦ With the chairperson is the contact person for the group.

Treasurer

The treasurer is the person who looks after any funds that the group has and may - depending on the size of the group - have the following responsibilities as part of that role:

♦ Set up a bank account in the group's name.

♦ Ensure any grants and fees that are received by the group are lodged into the account.

♦ Keep receipts, pay bills and record how money was spent.

Challenging Ageism

As a group of older people we are aware that ageism can have a negative impact on our wellbeing and may reduce our opportunities to be fully involved in society. Having the support of a strong community group can help to challenge negative stereotypes that exist about older people and can provide opportunities to work together to ensure an age friendly community for all.

We took part in an *agewise* **workshop** facilitated by Age & Opportunity where we discussed the impact of ageism and the negative attitudes that exist toward older people. We also talked about why this happens and what we can do about it! Our community connections have helped to challenge assumptions about ageing and to make us more aware about the importance of:

Being represented; Ensuring our opinions are listened to; Having views; Making choices; & Feeling valued!

We've made a decision not to limit ourselves because of age and encourage you to do the same! Don't believe in the stereotype!

For more information about Agewise workshops you can contact:

Age & Opportunity
Marino Institute of Education
Griffith Avenue
Dublin 9. (01) 805 7709

NUI Galway advises that community groups obtain references and Garda vet all volunteers to ensure everyone's safety. Garda vetting would be advised for one-to-one work where a volunteer is working with someone on their own, but it may not be necessary in every situation; for example a *group project* may not need volunteers to get vetted. *However references should always be checked*.

Community groups are welcome to access meeting rooms, theatres, galleries and spaces on the NUI Galway campus. To book an event space on campus for your community group you can contact the Community Knowledge Initiative in NUI Galway by phone at: (091) 495346 or visit cki@nuigalway.ie for more information.

When older people and students have opportunities to work on projects or do activities together it can:

♦ Create opportunities to understand each other better and challenge negative stereotypes.

♦ Provide a way for older people to share their life experience and knowledge with a younger generation.

♦ Promote communities that are positive places for all regardless of age.

Finally if your group is small you may decide just to have a chairperson who works with a couple of people to share the tasks we have described. If the issues facing your community are difficult or challenging you may need a more formal committee – remember there is strength in numbers!

AGENDA

Item 1: Minutes from Last Meeting

Item 2: Litter Problem

Item 3: Upcoming Events

Item 4: Any Other Business

Item 5: Tea, Coffee & Cake

How to access grants for your community group

Introduction:

Grants are a great way of accessing money for your group. There are various grants available from a variety of organisations which you may be able to apply for. In the next section we tell you about a number of organisations who have provided us with support.

VEC – Vocational Education Committee

There is a VEC in every city and county in Ireland. VECs provide and facilitate education opportunities and promote, co-ordinate and contribute to the development of education in their respective area. The further education training programmes run by the VEC are run in schools, colleges, adult centres of education and various community settings like our community centre in Melody's Court.

Grants we applied for:

An example of a grant which we applied for and received is the **Community Education Grant.** Galway City VEC advised and supported our group in making an application for funding for the grant, assisted with planning and organising and contacting tutors. The VEC have a comprehensive list of classes to choose from in their directory. We chose to avail of arts & crafts classes which were thoroughly enjoyed by all who participated.

You can contact your local college; maybe start with a particular department. We have done our projects with Occupational Therapy but another group we know has worked with Psychology and Community Development students. A good contact person would be the course coordinator as they will have responsibility for organising placements and projects. September/October is a good time to make contact as placements are arranged early in the academic year. Many third level colleges have a commitment to being more involved in the local community and this provides an opportunity to work together.

Our local university (NUI Galway) is committed to promoting greater civic engagement through their Community Knowledge Initiative (CKI). CKI's aim is to educate students to be effective and responsible citizens and this is realized through two programmes:

♦ Service Learning – Community organisations host students as part of their academic programme.

♦ ALIVE – Student volunteers actively engage with community organisations.

You can recruit student volunteers for your community roles by phoning (091) 495346 or emailing studentvolunteering@nuigalway.ie

- If there is a secondary school near your community you could call them and find out if they have a Transition Year and if there is a project that you could work together on. The TY coordinator can help to organise this with your group.

- Remember there are benefits for both students and older people in coming together.

Linking with university or college students.

- Students in third level colleges do community work in two ways; as part of a project connected to their studies or as part of a volunteering role.

- In relation to doing projects students often need a community or group where they can get practical experience in the subject they are studying. For example in Melody's Court we did a Tai Chi project with a final year Occupational Therapy student. She wanted to find out if older people taking part in a Tai Chi programme experienced a reduced fear of falling. She had read about it in her studies and wanted to test it with real people - that's where we came in! She organised a volunteer Tai Chi instructor and over a 6-week period we attended the classes and were assessed. It was a very enjoyable project and it was good to be in a position to help the student and also to learn about the impact that fear of falling has as you get older.

How to contact:

The VEC can be contacted online on www.vec.ie which leads you to a directory for all the VECs in Ireland. Each VEC has their own website with details of the relevant people to contact to apply for the grant.

If you do not have internet access you can also contact the VEC by telephone.

The numbers for the VECs are located in the *Useful Numbers* section of this booklet.

City and County Councils

Local and city councils offer a range of grants which community groups/residents groups like us can avail of. In Galway, they are known as **Community Support Schemes.**

Different councils may have a different name for the scheme; for example, in Kilkenny it is known as Kilkenny County Council Community and Cultural Festivities Grant.

These grants support groups like Melody's Court residents who wish to undertake amenity or economic initiatives in the area. A group may take this initiative with the aim of improving the cultural, heritage, social and economic aspects of their locality.

Here are some examples of grants and what they could be used for:

♦   Community Festivals Grant - You could run an event/festival for your area.

♦   Support for cultural and arts activities - Explore your artistic side by setting up art classes.

♦   Amenity Grant – enhancing local environment - Give the community a face lift!

♦   Initiatives for equipment for community benefit - Purchase a computer.

Who to Contact:

The numbers for City and County Councils are in the *Useful Numbers* section of the booklet.

Galway County Council
Community Support Scheme

Linking in with Students – Opportunities for Intergenerational work!

Introduction:

As a community we have been involved with a number of student projects. The projects have been varied and have provided us with new skills, health information and an opportunity to get to know the students. For example we have had music sessions, learned some arts and crafts, tried Tai Chi and have had assistance in spring cleaning our estate. We would recommend that other groups consider working with students as it's a great way to run activities at a minimal cost and your group would be helping students to get experience which assists them in their learning! Here is some more information.

Linking with secondary school students

♦   Many secondary schools have an optional Transition Year (TY) for students. TY provides an opportunity for students to take part in activities in the wider community and to gain experience in areas outside of the academic setting. Students learn leadership and citizenship skills in THE REAL WORLD!

♦   There is a teacher in the school who is designated as the Transition Year Coordinator and they have responsibility for the students and the activities that they are involved in.

In the application form be sure to:

♦ Give a clear title for the volunteer's role (for example art tutor/gardener/musician/yoga instructor). Be clear about what you need - you want to get the right person!

♦ Give the name of someone from your group who will be the contact person.

♦ Give specific details for your screening procedures (references/Garda checks).

Don't forget you too can become a volunteer if you so wish!

Contact:

See *Useful Numbers* section for a centre in your area. Our local Volunteer Centre is:

Galway Volunteer Centre, 17/18 Mill Street, Galway

091 539930

Galway email: info@volunteergalway.ie

Galway website: www.volunteergalway.ie

National website: www.volunteer.ie

Community Foundation for Ireland

Grants can be applied for from the Community Foundation for Ireland by community groups or an organisation can apply for it on their behalf. COPE Galway have applied on behalf of Melody's Court in the past.

An example of a grant we applied for is **The Grassroots Grant.** This grant aims to support communities by providing small grants for specific projects aiming to combat isolation and disadvantage. The grant is allocated to groups working in specific areas such as older people and carers.

The Foundation can be contacted at the following address:

Community Foundation for Ireland

32 Lower O'Connell Street

Dublin 1

Online: www.foundation.ie or telephone (01) 8747354

Ideas for Fundraising

Introduction

Fundraising has many benefits for groups in addition to making money. It promotes the group and gives a chance to recruit volunteers if needed. There are various ways of fundraising for community groups. Here are some examples:

♦ Art Exhibitions.

♦ A Coffee Morning.

♦ Have fun on Pancake Day.

♦ Organise a Car Boot Sale.

♦ Run a Quiz Night.

Promoting Your Event

You can promote your event in a variety of ways; for example we find the parish newsletter really gets the word around. Local radio is also effective. Fliers in your local shops and businesses also help to spread the word. Always make sure that the information is clear and includes date, time and venue for your event, contact telephone number and e-mail if necessary. Make sure you promote your event where the target group will see or hear about it.

How to recruit Volunteers to help in your Community

Introduction:

Local Volunteer Centres link individuals and groups who want to undertake voluntary activity with groups like Melody's Court who are seeking to involve volunteers in their community. The Volunteer Centre matches individuals and groups interested in volunteering with appropriate volunteering opportunities.

If your group is interested in getting a volunteer (could be to deliver an exercise class, help clean up the estate, or provide singing lessons!) you will need to complete a volunteer vacancy registration form with your local Volunteer Centre. It is recommended to put in as much information as you can about your group and what you want the volunteer to do. This then helps a volunteer to decide where they have an interest in volunteering and it helps to make the match work well. The Volunteer Centre is happy to meet with representatives of groups and can help with any queries that a group may have.

Age & Opportunity – Bealtaine

Bealtaine Festival occurs nationwide throughout the month of May each year. Bealtaine showcases the talents and creativity of older people. Community groups can get involved with Bealtaine in one of two ways: you can attend events running in your local area or you can plan and run your own event. Examples of events which your group could arrange include:

♦   Inviting a local artist, poet or writer to speak to your group.

♦   Offering to exhibit your artwork or to perform a musical piece at a local school.

♦   As a group organise to attend one of the many events taking place. For example a trip to a classic movie at the cinema or a drama in your local theatre.

If you want to organise something talk to the Bealtaine team:

Dominic Campbell (Artistic Director) 01 8057709
bealtaine@ageandopportunity.ie
Rebecca McLoughlin (Bealtaine Co-ordinator)
Rebecca.McLoughlin@ageandopportunity.ie

bealtainefestival
celebrating creativity as we age

Fundraising by linking with local charities

Another option for bringing a community group together is linking with a local charity and organising a fundraiser for them. As a community group, you have the opportunity to support organisations and charities in your locality, with the added benefit of accessing services they may have in place. For example, we fundraised for the community worker in COPE Galway and this helped ensure the continuation of the project.

COPE Galway

Fundraising Ideas

Suggestion Box
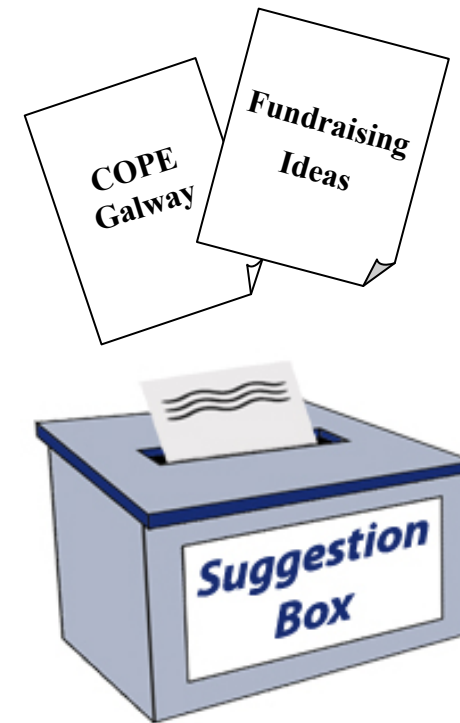
Organisations that might be of interest to your group

Macra na Feirme developed the *Know Your Neighbour Campaign*. This campaign is an annual event which is run nationwide and promotes community, highlighting the importance of getting together with neighbours. Macra na Feirme can support your group by providing posters, invitations and ideas for events. Examples of some events supported by Macra na Feirme in the past include: BBQs, coffee mornings, cheese & wine evenings, hill walks. It does not really matter what the event is; the important thing is to get together as a community. A national event like this can be a great excuse to get involved.

Macra na Feirme can be contacted by post:

Macra na Feirme

Irish Farm Centre

Bluebell

Dublin 12

E-mail: info@knowyourneighbour.ie

Phone: (01) 4268900

Age Action is one of Ireland's leading charities promoting positive ageing and better policies and services for all older people. Age Action aims to make Ireland the best place in the world in which to grow old. Age Action co-ordinates Positive Ageing Week. Groups and organisations across the country organise talks, leisure activities and fun events to emphasise the positive aspects of ageing. Positive Ageing Week provides an ideal opportunity for community groups to organise an event and take part in the week long celebrations for the older generation.

Age Action also advocate on behalf of older people, offer a Care & Repair Service and computer training programmes. They produce *Ageing Matters* magazine which is available online at *www.ageaction.ie/publications*. This magazine provides lots of information relevant to older people.