

It's Your Neighbourhood - the three pillars

Everyone taking part in It's Your Neighbourhood should focus on the three pillars of:

- Community participation;
- Environmental responsibility; and
- Gardening achievement

The pillars are listed here in order of importance and form the basis for how each group's achievements will be 'assessed' when our trained volunteer visits and writes up their report. Community participation is worth 40%, and environmental responsibility and gardening achievement are each worth 30%. There is some practical guidance below on ways you might incorporate the three pillars into your project.

1.1 General guidance

The suggestions that follow are examples of things that **may** be present in an It's Your Neighbourhood group – they are not a list of things that must be done by every group. When you form an It's Your Neighbourhood group and begin work, you should set your own goals and these should be suited to your local needs. The following ideas are to help show activities that may be relevant to each pillar, not rules to be followed or 'to-do' lists to be ticked off.

When deciding your goals, you should consider whether these are realistic and manageable and whether the work ties in with the three pillars. If you are a newly formed group, your first set of goals may relate to things such as forming a group, deciding on a project, consulting with the wider community and so on. Our volunteer will consider where your group started, the challenges that you faced, and how far you have come.

It's Your Neighbourhood is not competitive; achievement levels are used to recognise and applaud the accomplishments of those taking part, as well as to provide them with guidance for the future. Our volunteer should be welcomed as a mentor and friend – not as a judge – and you should take advantage of their visit to get constructive feedback. They will evaluate your achievements in the areas of the three pillars by considering how much work you have already done and how much more you could do, given your unique circumstances.

1.2 Community participation (worth 40% of total)



Community participation is about working together for the benefit of the local area and it may or may not involve participants in the physical work. It can also include fundraising, moral support, provision of facilities and resources, publicising events and many other activities.

There are no size limits. Larger groups may choose to divide into smaller sub-groups with particular objectives (for example, involving children/young people; developing community gardening activities; providing refreshments, making leaflets/posters etc.). A group may not have large numbers of active workers or "official" members, but it may be engaging more people in their various projects and activities on a casual, drop-in/drop-out basis. In other words, groups will come in many sizes and have many different structures; the key consideration is that even if only one or two people are driving the project, they are engaging with other members of the community or seeking ways to do this in the future.

Please be aware that groups working with children and young people are responsible for ensuring that they are doing so in accordance with the law with regards to child protection

and safety. For further information and guidance please contact Volunteer Scotland:
www.volunteerscotland.net

Examples of community participation:

- Being inclusive – the group is a part of the community and has an openness which enables any member of the community to support, contribute to or have a say in its work if they wish. This does not mean you could not have a group specifically for young people, for example. It simply means that even though most of the active participants in such a group would be the young people, the group would still engage other members of the community in what it was doing.
- Engaging – the people involved with the group’s activities are part of the community and are actively trying to involve other community members. If there are only two or three of you leading your project, you should provide ways for other community members to have a voice (open meetings etc.) and get involved on a casual basis (bulb planting days, family fun days etc.).
- Local ownership and direction – the decisions about what needs doing and how things are done are taken by the group after consulting the local community.
- Making a difference to local people – evidence that the group’s work has the support of local people and is improving aspects of their daily life.
- Partnership working – the group may also be working with any one or more of the following: Community Councils, Neighbourhood Watch groups, wildlife watch groups, police/community support officers, residents’ associations, local councillors, housing associations etc., as relevant.
- Getting support – the group has succeeded in or is working towards getting the support of its local council or councillor and businesses in the community, finding sponsors or sponsorship-in-kind, securing grants or other funding, etc.
- Evidence of planning for the future – the group has shown that it is thinking about, and planning, ways to maintain the work it has already done and/or make even more improvements.
- Retaining local control – local people are involved with the planning and decision-making.

It does not matter what type of community participation takes place – only that it is positive and involves local people in the process of improving their area.

1.3 Environmental responsibility (worth 30% of total)



Environmental responsibility is about care for your local area and minimising adverse impacts on the environment. It may include aspects such as cleanliness of the streets and pavements or reducing the use of natural resources. It is about the direct effects that people working at local level can achieve, and not about factors such as waste collection by the local authority.

Examples of environmental responsibility:

- Efforts to promote responsible dog-ownership and reduce dog fouling.
- Efforts to reduce littering, graffiti, flyposting and flytipping, and efforts to clean up areas spoiled by such activities. KSB’s Clean Up Scotland campaign can support groups in their efforts: www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/CUS
- Practising environmentally responsible approaches – use of peat-free compost, composting of green waste, minimising water usage, establishing local recycling etc. Check out our [Environmental Sustainability Guide](#).
- Development of community green spaces – increasing the use of the spaces and developing the skills and involvement of users.

- Conservation activities – supporting local wildlife through installation of bird/bat boxes, log piles or bee hives (and getting people involved in monitoring which species are using these – are the habitats in the right location / are they successful?); planting of pollinator friendly plants; re-introducing native species or controlling non-native/invasive species; creating new habitats or renovating existing ones such as ponds, wildflower meadows, coppicing etc.
- Efforts to encourage a sense of local heritage – education and heritage-related activities such as tree trails, history leaflets, signage/interpretation boards etc.



1.4 Gardening achievement (worth 30% of total)

The contents of this section will be completely dependent on the nature of your local area and should always be relevant and appropriate to your needs and to the wishes of the community. At all stages there should be consideration given to good gardening practices. The gardening should enhance the locality for the community and should be within your group's ability to develop over the long term.

Examples of good gardening practices are things such as:

- Good plant choices for the local conditions (soil, climate, aspect), which suit the natural and built environment; a good balance between seasonal and permanent planting. All It's Your Neighbourhood groups can access a free advisory service through the RHS – [email](#) for more information.
- Appropriate quality of maintenance – for example, good pruning, mulching, lack of weeds.
- Creativity – planting that shows originality and local flavour.
- Development of community gardening activities – developing areas in partnership with village halls, church groups, allotment societies, residents' associations, etc.; undertaking group planting events for window boxes, hanging baskets, bulbs, wildflower areas, etc.
- Taking on the maintenance of neglected areas such as barren verges or waste ground – speak to your local council to find out who owns the land.