

What is It's Your Neighbourhood?

The It's Your Neighbourhood initiative is for volunteer-led community gardening groups which are focused on cleaning and greening up their local area, whether that's the street or estate where they live, the back alley they share, or the local community centre's outdoor space.

It's Your Neighbourhood is an inclusive, non-competitive scheme, which welcomes groups of all kinds, as long as they fit the criteria outlined below. There is no charge to participate.

The initiative's focus is on bringing members of the community together to make a positive change to the place they live, work or spend their leisure time. Participating groups are asked to focus on its three core pillars of:

- Community Participation;
- Environmental Responsibility; and
- Gardening Achievement

While participating groups are not judged against each other, they are visited by volunteer It's Your Neighbourhood assessors who provide valuable feedback and helpful advice on how to develop current activities and encourage on-going improvements. Based on the visit, each community will receive a certificate of achievement reflecting how well they have met the It's Your Neighbourhood aims as included in the three core pillars. There are five levels of achievement - Establishing, Improving, Advancing, Thriving and Outstanding - and, for groups which have consistently grown and improved over the years of taking part, a Certificate of Distinction is available.

Who can enter?

It's Your Neighbourhood is open to groups of all sizes and a variety of projects, as long as they are focused on cleaning up and greening their local area, and as long as they are:

- A group;
- Hands on;
- Involved in community gardening;
- Engaging and/or getting input from the community;
- Benefiting the community;
- Volunteer-led;
- Considering environmentally responsible behaviours;
- Sustainable over time; and
- Owned by the community and the community takes responsibility for the work.

Some examples of It's Your Neighbourhood groups are:

- A residents' group/association;
- A friends group connected to a local green space, park or garden;
- A group of neighbours;
- A gardening group in a hospital / residential home / sheltered housing complex;
- A youth club/Scouts, Brownies or Girl Guide group; and
- A community allotment group.

What kinds of projects do It's Your Neighbourhood groups carry out?

The projects that It's Your Neighbourhood groups do will be entirely decided by the local situation. The group will choose their project based on the local needs and environment and what might benefit their local community. These will be the most important considerations when deciding on a project.

Some examples of what It's Your Neighbourhood groups have done are:

- Restoring a churchyard;
- Converting a derelict area into useable green space;
- Taking over the improvement and maintenance of green spaces on their estate;
- Transforming a residential back alley into a community meeting space and garden (often reducing incidents of anti-social behaviour in the process);
- Adopting a square, roundabout or brownfield space and renovating it;
- Redeveloping all the front gardens on (part of) a street using any number of schemes (hanging baskets, window boxes for growing herbs etc.);
- Forming a Friends group to look after (part of) the local park; and
- Uniting local retailers to transform the high street/shopping area.

What are the benefits of participation?

By participating in It's Your Neighbourhood, your community will benefit from:

- National recognition for your group's work;
- Part of a Scotland-wide campaign, and the chance to network with other groups across the country;
- Cleaner and greener surroundings;
- Developing a sense of community, reducing social isolation, and creating positive interaction between community members;
- Safer environments for the enjoyment of local people;
- Reduction in anti-social behaviour;
- Increased local pride as people take ownership of the improvements to the area;
- Positive effects on the local economy, such as increased commercial enterprise;
- Helping the environment, through recycling, energy conservation, reducing litter, improving/adding green spaces and other sustainable practices; and
- Greater community contact/building relationships with the local authority.