

STARTING A COMMUNITY FOOD GROWING PROJECT

Below are some steps you can expect to accomplish before starting any community food growing project.

Forming an association

An association is a constituted group that will be responsible for the management of the growing site. Some funding opportunities are available only to constituted associations. This management structure also allows for quick decision making. It can be a voice for plot holders, a source of horticulture advice and can help build a sense of community.

Writing a constitution

To form an association there needs to be a written constitution that encompasses the aims and rules that everyone in the group agrees upon. By agreeing upon this at the start it will ensure that all members understand the purpose of the group and the site is more likely to be successful. It is good practice to go back to the constitution at a later date to assess whether the group is going in the right direction.

Committee members and roles

A Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer need to be appointed and voted in. The responsibility of each committee member will depend on what type of management system the association agrees on and especially important that the Treasurer opens a bank account for the association. It's important that each committee member can commit to their responsibilities and understands the time commitment that is needed on top of managing their plot.

Identifying suitable land

The council may be able to help identify suitable land for a food growing site and can also run a community consultation to understand who in the community is interested in a food growing. This will also help to see if any land has been identified within the area and can help identify any obstacles at an early stage. It may be that a proposed site design could be included in the proposal to lease the land. The council can also assist with this.

Preparing the site

Volunteers can help with the preparation of the site, such as clearing any brambles, bushes and grass. This is also a great time to install any amenities that you would like to see on site. This will take a significant period of time and is best done in the autumn. The group can also decide on the level of preparation that they deem appropriate to hand over the land to the plot holders.

Site rules and regulations

Every growing site should have their Rules and Regulations which have been agreed upon between the association and the community. The council have written a template list of Allotment Site Regulations, which can be used as a reference when writing your own. The rules will help the association achieve the overarching constitution and will help with any disorderly conduct.

Commitment

The appointed management team needs to be committed and look to the longer term. At first, you will have to meet regularly and often to plan and anticipate problems before they arise. Short meetings work best. Keep an eye on your finances and regularly check on what funding is available. New members will have to be welcomed and encouraged to participate. There may also be opportunities to increase horticulture, food preparation and cooking skills.

If you would like any more information, please contact allotments@pkc.gov.uk