

## Start a Street Association – make your street your ‘village’!

With the strap-line ‘friendship, fun, belonging, a helping hand’, as Street Association is a really positive contemporary format for bringing people together in real community. It’s small (just your street) and that means that people are actually more likely to be interested (they like to meet neighbours, more than people who live half a mile away!)

Something like 100 houses is ideal, so on a big street you might split it (and call yours xxxx Road south Street Association, or equivalent). The best thing to do is to put out a letter like **this**, signed if possible by you and a couple of others, inviting people to come and meet over coffee and cakes one evening, with about a week’s notice. The letter has a response device and so you’ll have some idea who’s coming. Host it in your front room or a nearby venue – but a home is nice. So often, people say “I was surprised how nice everyone was”. Maybe 5-15 people will come, with others saying they can’t, but are interested. If you can knock on doors and speak to people as you deliver the letter, so much the better. The personal touch works!

When they come, after a bit of chat and getting to know each other, suggest the idea of a Street Association and talk about what you might all do together – e.g. a Christmas party, a picnic, quiz evening, fish and chips supper, a kid’s activity in the park, barbecue, coffee morning etc. Get a date for the first one and share tasks (such as producing a leaflet, bringing food, talking to neighbours, etc). Then you’re airborne! Window stickers can be downloaded **here**. It’s good to hand them out at the first meeting. They look like this:



A piece of advice: these things require persistence. Often, there’s plenty of good will but the turnout can be small (some being busy, or having a sick child, away, forgetting, etc). People do lead busy lives. But, over time, it makes a huge difference to any street. Neighbours literally (as the song goes) become good friends, there’s smiling and chatting, kids grow up in a safer environment – and there’s a supportive network for more elderly or vulnerable neighbours, who often want contact but ‘don’t want to impose’. And community is fun! So, do persist. Some events will go swimmingly, others will be small. Even then, what’s wrong with a handful of people coming together and getting to know each other?

There’s much more on this at [www.streetassociations.org](http://www.streetassociations.org), including a video you can play at the first meeting. There’s also advice and support from the Street Associations team – call 0121 440 8600 or write to [office@streetassociations.org](mailto:office@streetassociations.org).

