

If you've taken on this role, well done! It will make a huge contribution to the life of the street if it's done with energy and enthusiasm.

The first thing to bear in mind is that there is a purpose to all this – not just to have fun (which certainly is part of the purpose), but also to create the conditions in which people can get to know one-another, become friends and make the street a place of 'belonging'. Also, this is an opportunity to 'prise' some people out of their loneliness (if they'll let you), personally encouraging them to come to this and that – even saying "I'll come and pick you up – we can go together". That can be a wonderful thing to do – and you can gradually build a team of people who are able to help others in this way.

So the key to all that follows is: what events and activities might help bring people together and what, in particular, might help the people who are currently the most isolated to come out of their isolation?

Here are some ideas of what could be done. Just pick three or four to start with. They are not for you to do alone. You have a core group around you in the Street Association and these activities would be for you to put on as a team, with you taking the lead. You particularly need to work with the communications coordinator, whose job is to know who is who in the street – who has kids, who is elderly etc – and to help you with the inviting. You'll also find that the whole core group wants to be thoroughly involved with the events side. It's a team effort, but someone needs to take the lead!

1. A children's party. This is certain to be popular. You'd probably want to set an age range and might want to split it into two parties on different occasions, one for those aged 4-7 ('infants' – reception and Year 1), and the other, say, 8-11 ('juniors', Year 3 and above). The best time of year to do this is Spring or Summer, when you can mix outdoor activities (is there a park or green space near you, or a good sized garden?) where you could play wide games, have races, and then organize a place to lay on some food for when the kids have let off steam. We suggest a 2.30pm start on a Saturday, with games until 4.00pm and then food, with a 5.00pm finish. Because of the intentional community-building purpose behind all this, try and include the parents. Ask them to come and help organize things, bring some of the food (so everyone contributes) – and get to know each other in the process. Parents can have coffee and cakes, while the kids eat their food.

2. A tea for seniors. This is critical. Statistics show that about half of all elderly people regard television as their main form of company. We can change this! The idea is that this 'tea' can lead to a weekly tea at one or other person's home – and you can work with the initiatives coordinator to establish that routine, once the initial event has been a success and elderly people who came have begun to get to know each other. Note: you may need a team to help transport any frail people (even if it is only down the road). We suggest inviting the over-65s. The first meeting could be

in a larger home, or a community hall, or a pub function room, or a church/church hall. (Avoid stairs and try and find a place with a downstairs toilet!) It needs a focus (as well as time to chat, have tea and cakes and get to know others). How about having someone to give a little talk about what they do, or somewhere they went? (Talks should be short, loud and clear!) Or maybe someone to perform something musical? Some of the younger and fitter people over 65 will be keen and able to help the older and frailer guests, some of whom will have hearing difficulties and need to be befriended on a one-to-one basis.

3. Toddler group. Again, this could be a one-off event that leads to a regular activity, organized by those that benefit, with the help of the initiatives coordinator (i.e., it won't be your responsibility once it gets going). Get one of the parents with a big room to host it. They will have toys etc, but ask each parent to bring a toy to add to the fun! Lay on snacks for the children and coffee and cakes for the parents and charge £1 a head – or ask the parents to bring their own snacks for the kids. You could ask for a couple of volunteers to mind the children while the other parents meet and talk.

4. Family fun afternoon. This could take place in a local park or sports field, probably on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon. Things like relay races, egg and spoon race, sack race, legs tied together race etc, with kids and parents taking part, are great fun and really break the ice. Suggest two balanced teams and a running score with all sorts of different games and activities contributing to an overall score. Tea and cakes afterwards, perhaps in the same place, or a barbecue. Could end up in home with a big screen t.v. and show a Disney type film.

5. A teens evening. Again, this could be split between 11-14 and 15 up. A trip ten-pin bowling, with a number of parents to help supervise and transport, would be a good idea (each pays their way). Or a trip to the movies; or watch a DVD together at someone's home. Lay on some crisps and coke etc. Remember, this is all about making friendships. Some teenagers are actually very isolated (about 22% of them, according to a recent poll, "feel isolated most of the time") and would love to be included in a friendship group. Say to them that this gathering of teenagers in the same street is meant to be a "safe place", where they can be themselves and not try so hard to look cool! Encourage them to make the effort to include all teenagers in the street, even the shy ones or the ones that aren't popular.

6. A family barbecue. Chose a location (a big garden, or local park), organize for several families to bring their barbecue equipment. Probably charge £1 a head and buy frozen burgers and sausages and buns (you can normally send someone to buy more quickly enough if the numbers are more than expected). People chat and get to know each other. Maybe have one or two games for the children. Are there musicians in the street? Get some live music going, if there are.

7. A street party. The Big Lunch, an annual event, normally in June, is an ideal time to go for a street party. Ask the local council for a street closure, decorate the street with bunting, get tables and chairs out, maybe organize a quiz or even a Karaoke competition! You'd need to get a special working group of volunteers together to make this happen. Go to www.thebiglunch.com for lots of help and advice about how to do this.

8. Arts and crafts get-together. Invite people interested in arts and crafts to come together for an afternoon – show what they've done, maybe give others a go (e.g. painting, pottery, dress making, cake decorating etc, with relevant equipment if someone has it), share tips, have fun. See who knows enough to introduce others to their favorite craft.

9. An outing. There might be all sorts of places where some people would like to go (e.g. a lovely garden centre, a museum, a theatre trip, a blockbuster movie, a football match). These things, if someone organizes them, bring people together. Generally, it doesn't matter too much whether 5 or 25 want to go – it's still worth doing.

10. A dance. This depends on having a suitable venue (e.g. a function room or church hall nearby). Try putting on a 60s evening (ask a small group to get together some CDs), maybe hire disco equipment, lay on wine and cheese or a simple supper like sausage and mash, charge £2. Could ask people to come in fancy dress! Do it for all ages together, from teenagers upwards.

11. Other ideas. A book club; a group to go swimming together once a week; a cooking club (learn and eat!); a walk or even a hiking day; young adults go clubbing together; get the musicians together; a talent show; watch key international football matches on TV together (someone with a big screen can host it); a quiz night (maybe do a deal with a local restaurant to have a fixed price buffet and invite the whole street for the quiz night there); organise carol singing at Christmas, an Easter egg hunt at Easter, and no doubt much more!

Bear in mind that, as social secretary, a lot can be done by getting others to do most of the work – ask people what kind of events they would like and you'll probably at the same time find that some of the same people have a lot of skill and energy to make it happen. You might look for people in the street who don't go out to work and have time to do something for the street – and build an events team! One of the thrilling things about watching Street Associations grow has been the sheer range and originality of ideas for events that different Associations have come up with. This is an opportunity to be creative – and feed back to us, at Uturn UK, what you've done, so that we can pass the idea to others.