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Adopt an alleyway

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Introduction

We all want to live in a place that makes us feel happy and in a neighbourhood we feel proud of. Many areas in our communities could use some love and care. Perhaps there's an alleyway you've noticed, that you'd like to transform alongside others.

In Blackpool we want to work with our communities to support them to make the changes they'd like to see in their local area. There are numerous ways to turn your grey spaces into green ones. You might consider starting a community garden to grow food for sharing, planting a low-maintenance wildflower meadow to attract wildlife, creating a peaceful relaxation area, or simply filling the space with plants, trees, and green walls.

As part of Blackpool Council's empowering community's priority, this guidance has been developed to support communities, groups of residents, or local businesses to take ownership of shared community spaces. By following the guidance outlined in this document, you will be provided with the necessary information needed in order to transform your community's alleyway. Building a sense of neighbourhood at the same time.

Adopt an alleyway process

The adopt an alleyway programme is designed to act as that first step into community activism and is a less formal and more supportive process, led by the local community.

The process is simple:

1. Talk to your neighbours

Get people involved, share ideas and come up with a plan. The more of the community you can engage the better. Although not everyone who shares the space, needs to be involved, all must agree to the project happening. Access rights must be maintained and unobstructed.

[Templates for letters, posters and leaflets to help raise awareness with your neighbours](#) are available from Enveco NW.

Setting up a WhatsApp group or Facebook page is a great way to keep interested neighbours connected and updated as you plan your tidy up and transformation days.

2. Contact the council

Get in touch with us at thirdsector@blackpool.gov.uk and tell us which area you're interested in. Please include the location of the alley and confirmation you have the support of your neighbours. If you could include photos of the alleyway that would also help, although not essential.

Enveco will undertake a site visit, to assess the suitability of the area, and the work involved. They will then agree on a day to assist in the clean-up.

3. Organise a clean-up

Once you've agreed a clean-up date, it's time to promote your event with the community and gather your team. Plan a couple of

months in advance to allow plenty of time to get prepared.

Envenco will bring any necessary equipment like bin bags and little pickers. Your team will need to wear appropriate clothing and footwear.

Where possible, get a local shop to donate refreshments or, ask a volunteer to provide snacks and drinks as their volunteer role. Adding a bit of music, can encourage others to get involved while achieving something positive locally. It's worth informing local groups and businesses as some groups encourage community ownership and businesses can sometimes provide staff time as part of their corporate social responsibility.

4. Transform the space

Come together as a community to discuss what you want the space to achieve. Do you want a community herb garden? A space to sit and relax or read a book? Somewhere to socialise? Somewhere for children to play?

When considering transforming the space you'll need to consider any access rights across the space and ensure these are maintained.

5. Share your success

We love to hear about your successes and share them with other groups for inspiration. If you'd like to raise awareness of your project please email thirdsector@blackpool.gov.uk with a write up of your activity and any photos.

Ideas for activity

We've added some ideas to think about when planning your transformation. It's worth listing everything and then splitting the tasks between volunteers. If there is some activity that can't be achieved still list it and there may be a local business or team that can help. Please note that the maintenance of the space and items placed, is the responsibility of the volunteers.

- **Add light** – Do you want to add light to the space? If so solar lights are a great, low maintenance option
- **Add colour** – This can be achieved through painting, adding plants and coloured plant pots. Remember that when painting items for use outdoors make sure to use varnish or outdoor paint
- **Choosing plants** – Choose plants that work for the space – they'll need to be hardy to survive outside. Focusing on perennial plants that re-bud every year to reduce maintenance
- **Utilising space** – Floor space is limited in alleyways, especially if access is still required, however there is plenty of wall space to use. Look at box planters, wall climbing plants and adding wall hanging planters
- **Somewhere to sit** – To create a community hub, accessible for all it's worth considering whether you'd like to add some seating or a benched area. Projects such as the 'chatty bench' are a great way to provide that space while supporting fellow community members and getting to know your neighbours
- **Basic maintenance** – Do the walls need some pointing to get looking back to their best? Are there weeds that need removing
- **Local wildlife** – Could you add a bird box, bug hotel or bird feeders
- **Upcycling** – Disused pallets, cupboards, bookshelves and tables can all be upcycled to provide creative plant pots, bedding areas or boarders. Grab yourself a bargain at Blackpool Council's Re-use Shop, located at the tip (Household Waste Recycling Centre) on [Bristol Avenue](#), Bispham.
- **Launch event** – Once decorated do you want to organise an 'alley party' to celebrate and encourage community use
- **Free items** – You can often source free items such as bulbs and pots on Freecycle or Marketplace. Alternatively local businesses and supermarkets can often be keen to support community projects and may be able to donate items or staff time

Funding

While a lot of activity can be achieved with a little bit of time, some larger activity requires funding to achieve. Many organisations such as the National Lottery, People's Postcode lottery and the Royal Horticultural Society offer funding for community projects.

If you would like some support with a funding application or want to be added to the community distribution list to hear about funding opportunities, please email the community engagement team at thirdsector@blackpool.gov.uk.

In some cases it may be possible for your local councillor to support your project. They may be able to offer advice, have contacts who can assist, or fund the purchase of small items, such as plants, boxes or trellises, through their ward budget.

To find out more please [contact your local councillor](#).

Managing risks

Risk assessments

Before undertaking any activity it's 'best practice' to undertake a risk assessment of the activity and site. This ensures that all participants are aware how to keep themselves and others safe.

You can refer to the [HSE website](#) for guidance.

We recommend the following procedures are put in place:

- Participants under the age of 18 must be supervised
- Volunteer groups are prohibited from moving equipment or creating situations that may be considered hazardous
- Volunteer group should not schedule any activity when threatening weather is present or perform outside their capabilities
- Power tools and motor-driven equipment should only be used if trained on usage
- Appropriate clothing and footwear should be worn
- Work during daylight hours and beware of adjacent traffic
- Avoid picking up discarded syringes, unknown chemicals, or other hazards- if encountered, please contact Enveco on 01253 478418, who will remove it within 2 hours

Insurance

Obtaining public liability insurance for the group is essential and offers protection in case of accidental damage or injury to a member of the public or their property. This can be obtained by any provider but we would recommend cover up to £5M. It is inexpensive and very cost effective.

Friends of groups

The group could choose to become a friends of group. This would cover the group under Blackpool Councils public liability insurance.

[Find out more about becoming a friends of group](#) or email parks@blackpool.gov.uk .

Data protection guidance

Tips on how to manage residents personal information:

- Keep data safe and secure and to always use the minimum necessary - address (number) and contacts
- Keep paper copies of personal data in locked cabinets and/or drawers - not on public display
- Do not share the data outside of the group, post on social media or take images/photos/videos without permission
- Always securely destroy/delete any personal data no longer required immediately

[More information about how Blackpool Council process your data](#)

Case studies

St Thomas' Church

This project was a collaboration between Councillor Marshall and Councillor Thomas, St Thomas' Church and Enveco. St Thomas' Church reached out to the councillors with the idea, sharing their good relationship with the families living on Peter Street.

We had the graphics printed by A1 Linings, a local small business, using our ward funding to cover the costs.

Our goal was to create a safe area for children to play, especially during times when anti-social behaviour was prevalent in the neighbourhood. Fortunately, thanks to hotspot policing, incidents of antisocial behaviour and crime have significantly decreased.

Moreover, the alleyway connects two busy roads, Counce Street and Peter Street, and with limited green spaces in the vicinity, it serves as a valuable alternative for outdoor activities.

Barclay Avenue

What an incredible team! They turned the challenging task of clearing my late dad's un-adopted alleyway into something positive and valuable for the residents who were hesitant to take it on. A big thank you to Jackie for the endless cups of tea, Councillor Humphreys, Diane Farley, Ben, and the Enveco crew for all the laughs—everything was accomplished with plenty of tea, chocolates, and good-natured banter! We planned for a day and a half but finished it all in just one morning! Now I have the rest of the week off!

This was a pilot project aimed at inspiring others to "adopt their alleyway" and transform the space into something usable and beautiful.

Thursfield Avenue

We moved into our house at the beginning of December 2022, and the alleyway alongside and round the back of our house, was impassable with brambles, thistles, nettles and other weeds. Weeding was simply hard work. I bought a lot of anti-weed matting, but thanks to Facebook Market Place and the Bristol Ave recycling centre, I have kept cost to a minimum. I have managed to get free gravel, slate, paving slabs, seating, water butts, ornaments, lawn, plant pots and plants.

It is my plan, this year, to make cat sleepers (if cats have got lost and need shelter). At Bristol Avenue you can get affordable, quality compost and very cheap planters. It's good to think outside the box with what you can use as planters, along with plants to fill them. A lot of existing plants can be thinned out, or have cuttings taken from them. Grow from seeds or buy discounted priced plants to keep the price affordable. In my alleyway I am trying to have a mix of flowers, fruit, vegetables and herbs.

I am hoping that this is the year that my neighbours and I can start enjoying events in the alleyway and that I can get more people involved, but hopefully, what I have done can show anything is possible with a little hard work.

Belle Vue Strawberry Gardens

In August 2016 a group of residents came together in the alley for cake tea and for a walk and talk about what we had in front of us. We are very fortunate in that our alleyway contains strips of land with established trees. But these areas were being used for dumping rubbish and as an extension of the local tip.

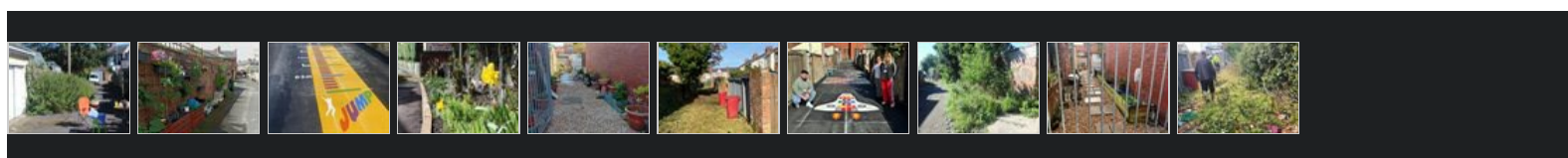
Something positive emerged from our meeting – we formed a community action group with a common objective, to clean up, nurture and re-love the strips of land. We decided it was time to act before they got any worse and became a burden to the residents and the council.

We wanted to protect and bring back a sense of respect for the area we live in. So now we had our seed of an idea, and we just needed to plant it. The transformation of the alley is still ongoing. Collective action of a very concerted type eventually cleared the wild overgrowth and rubbish that had accumulated over the years. Growing beds were established by the various participants.

Friendly relationships have now become the norm. People now meet, eat and socialise not only down the alley but also in each other's houses and gardens and nearby pubs and restaurants. As a by-product we have an active neighbourhood watch scheme, recognised by the police.

Crime and disorderly behaviour are all but non-existent. People now talk to each other.

Plans are afoot to continue and develop this warm, inclusive community with a view to bringing more residents, of any age, the benefit of good company and happiness.



Additional information

Blackpool Council

Municipal Buildings
Corporation Street
Blackpool
FY1 1NF

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