



# Community Cleanup Guidelines



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## Introduction

A Community Cleanup is a great way of showing that your group cares about its local area and will also encourage others not to litter and to take pride in where they live.

This information sheet will give you advice on how to undertake a cleanup safely. It also provides tips on how to encourage others to get involved and maximise publicity for your efforts.

We will help you by lending you equipment and arranging for the collected litter to be removed. But your cleanup can only be a real success through the efforts of your community.

We hope that this information will help you have a safe, successful and enjoyable event.

## Planning ahead

- **Where are you going to clean up?**  
You could clean up your local area, a local landmark or take action on a well-known 'grot spot'. If the area is not public land, you must get permission from the landowner for your activities.
- **How will the waste be removed after the event?**  
Contact our Community Awareness Team on 028 9027 0230 at least one week before your cleanup to arrange for collection. If you recover bulky household items during your cleanup (like mattresses or furniture) please call our contact centre on 9027 0230 and we can arrange for this to be collected free of charge.

- **How will you do it?**

Will the cleanup be a simple litter pick or will you have a theme or set a challenge? Remember that you want it to be as much fun as possible!

- **Risk assessment**

Once you've picked a place for your cleanup, visit the site and carry out a full risk assessment using the check sheet provided in Appendix 1. This is a careful examination of the possible risks that could cause harm to you or your volunteers.

If the area carries too many risks for you and your group, choose somewhere else.

**Volunteers taking part in a cleanup will not be insured by Belfast City Council. They undertake the cleanup at their own risk.**

## **The cleanup crew**

It's a good idea to get as many volunteers as possible to help with the cleanup - remember many hands make light work! To encourage more people to take part, why not try the following

- Approach local residents either through leaflets, calling at homes or through residents' groups.
- Put up posters up in local shops, supermarkets and libraries.
- Send out a press release to your local media calling for volunteers (please see Appendix 2 for a sample press release).

## **Equipment and preparation**

Organise your equipment by contacting us on 028 9027 0230.

We will supply the following equipment for your cleanup; refuse sacks, adult and children's litter picks and gloves, shovels, brushes and high visibility jackets. We will collect this equipment after the cleanup.

## Publicity

Cleanups can be excellent community events and great local stories. Let your local media know what you are doing and you may attract publicity and get recognition for your efforts.

### Tips for targeting the media

Contact the news desk of your local newspaper, radio or television station to inform them of your event. Let them know at least one week before the event so they can put the date in their diary (it's a good idea to contact them the day before to remind them of your event).

The date and timing of your event has to suit you and your volunteers but, if possible, organise your event at a convenient time for the media. Photocalls in the morning are preferable so deadlines can be met for the evening newspaper or broadcasts.

Provide the media with an interesting angle to ensure your story is covered. Make sure you let the media know:

- Who is taking part (you may want to invite your local councillor).
- When your activity is taking place.
- Where you are cleaning up.
- Why you chose that particular location.
- What is interesting, unusual or unique about your event.
- How you are going to do your cleanup.

Don't be disheartened if the media do not cover your story. On the day other news stories may take precedence over yours. Just make sure your volunteers have had as much fun as possible – see the media coverage as a bonus.

## Health and safety considerations for your community cleanup

Questions to ask at the planning stage	Yes/No
Have you advised Belfast City Council that you will be carrying out a community cleanup and made arrangements for the rubbish to be deposited or collected?	
Has a responsible person(s) been appointed to take overall charge of the clean up?	
Has the proposed site been visited to check for hazards?	
Hazards you need to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Busy roads or excessive traffic</li> <li>• Fast flowing or deep water</li> <li>• Steep banks, drops or large holes</li> <li>• Derelict or unsafe buildings</li> <li>• Construction sites or areas</li> <li>• Unidentified cans or drums, hazardous waste, pesticides or chemicals.</li> <li>• Broken glass or other sharp objects</li> <li>• Syringes or drug related refuse</li> <li>• Excessive dog waste, animal waste or dead animal carcasses</li> </ul>	
If any of these hazards are identified, have suitable precautions to protect those carrying out the clean up been identified and implemented?	
<b>If too many hazards, or particularly dangerous hazards, are identified at a specific site consider selecting somewhere else.</b>	

Questions to ask before you begin	Yes/No
Are there enough adults to supervise any children coming along?	
Do you have enough refuse sacks for the rubbish?	
Are there enough suitable gloves available?	
Are there litter pickers, brushes and shovels available?	
<b>We will provide refuse sacks, litter pickers, gloves, shovels and brushes, which we will then collect after the clean up.</b>	
Does everyone know what to do if they encounter unidentified drums, cans, chemicals?	
Does everyone know what to do if they encounter hypodermic needles, other drugs related waste, condoms, and other hazardous type waste?	
Are there suitable containers for sharp objects like needles and glass?	
Do all relevant people know where they are or how to use them?	
Does everyone know who to report any hazardous or suspicious items to?	

**For the likes of hypodermic needles, or other drugs related litter, it is often best to leave in place and contact us on 028 9027 0230 (Mon-Fri) to arrange collection. You can consider allocating the handling of any hazardous waste to a limited number of individuals, who should then be suitably briefed and, if necessary, trained on specific procedures. Take no chances. If in doubt - leave!**

Does everyone know to wash hands before eating, and after handling the rubbish?	
Does everyone know not to lift very heavy items and to ask for help if in any doubt?	
Is everyone wearing suitable clothing such as warm, comfortable but sturdy footwear?	
Is everyone wearing suitable clothing for the weather such as waterproof for wet weather, hats for sun protection?	
Are reflective arm bands on jackets if out in the dark near roads?	
Is there a first aid box available with plasters and antiseptic wipes?	
For larger groups, is there a first aider or has first aid provision been arranged?	
<b>Where practicable consider trying to utilise any local first aid facilities such as a local leisure centre.</b>	
Does everyone know where they are going and what route to take?	
Does everyone know where the nearest toilets and welfare facilities are?	
Are there enough phones, or other means, to ensure suitable communications, and to ensure there is a means of calling for help in the event of an emergency?	
Does everyone have all the safety information they need, including relevant phone numbers?	
Does everyone know who they can go to if they have any problems or questions?	
<b>If you have any health and safety concerns or questions regarding a planned clean up always seek advice and assistance before proceeding!</b>	

## **Keeping it safe**

Make sure everyone is aware of potentially dangerous items which they should not pick up, as identified during your risk assessment.

Consider the ages of the children involved in your cleanup and make sure that a sufficient number of adults are present to supervise. Before your cleanup, make sure children understand which items are potentially dangerous and should not be picked up. Warn them not to pick up any items that they are the least bit unsure about. Don't let children attempt to pick up heavy or bulky items.

If you come across hypodermic needles or drugs-related litter, do not touch these yourselves, call 028 9027 0230 (Mon-Fri) or 078504 99622 during out of hours or alternatively you can call your cleanup contact in the council. It will also be necessary to isolate the area to ensure other members of the cleanup crew do not come in to contact with such material.

## **Insurance cover**

Obtaining Public Liability Insurance is very important and not very expensive. This will provide cover for your legal liability arising from accidental damage or injury that occurs during the event, including damage or injury to a member of the public or their property.

If you represent an organisation or school it is possible that you already have insurance in place, but it is important to check that cleanups are covered under such insurance.

Please note that these guidelines are issued by Belfast City Council for guidance only, and are not intended to create any legal relationship between the council and any group or individual participating in a cleanup. Anybody who follows these guidelines does so at their own risk. Belfast City Council will not be responsible for any personal injury (including death) or loss and damage sustained by any person as a result of participating in a cleanup, and all persons participating in a cleanup do so at their own risk.

### Sample news release

Here is a sample news release to get you started. Try to keep your release to two pages or less and always allow extra spacing between the lines.

NEWS RELEASE

LITTER- DON'T DROP IT, STOP IT! URGE (NAME OF AREA)  
GROUP

Date: (insert date)  
For immediate release

A group of residents from (name of area) have had enough of rubbish. They are tired of the tide of litter that is bringing down the reputation of Belfast.

And just to prove how much they loathe litter, the (name of group and where they are based) are going to go out into the streets next (date) and get their hands dirty picking up litter. By their actions they are going to show the rest of the community how big a problem litter is – and to encourage them to start disposing of it properly.

Belfast City Council have recently revealed that it costs nearly £11 million to clean Belfast's streets, which is more than virtually every other similar size city across the UK. If people didn't drop so much litter the Council wouldn't have to spend so much money on street cleansing. Littered streets can severely damage business and tourism opportunities.

Like everywhere else in Northern Ireland, (the name of area) has its fair share of litter problems.

But thanks to the (name of group) they at least have people, prepared to do something about it.

The (name of group) will begin to tackle rubbish at (location) on (time and date). They are hoping that as many volunteers as possible will come and join them and that the rest of the community gets the message "LITTER – DON'T DROP IT, STOP IT!"

(Name if spokesperson from group) said:

"This cleanup will show others that we care about the future of our local environment and that we are not prepared to live, work and play in an area that is blighted by rubbish. Working together as a community, creates a sense of local pride and for some of our younger volunteers it is their first taste of citizenship"

\*\* The (name of group) clean up takes place at:

Location

Date

Time

You are invited to send a photographer / reporter to this event.

For further information please contact (name) on (phone number/mobile).

END