



## Taking your first steps towards supporting your high street 10 easy ideas

### 1. Talk to your neighbours!

One passionate person working to improve their shop can have a huge impact. But lots of retailers working together with a shared plan could be transformative. So talk to other retailers on your high street and see what you think the problems are in your area, and what you could do about them. And don't just talk to the small guys – some of the larger companies such as Boots and Costa have a really strong record of working with local partners. Talk to them and see what they can do. It's amazing what can be achieved over a cup of coffee!

### 2. What about an event?

Local people love their high streets and want a reason to go there and spend time with their communities. Why not talk to other local traders about running an event? Easter is coming up – how could you celebrate it? Up and down the country local traders are putting on street parties, food festivals, gig nights and kiddies competition. What could you do? Perhaps start with An [Independent Easter](#) campaign.

### 3. Formal/informal?

You could even look at setting up a Trader's Association to ensure your voice is heard. Many groups set up informally with a very basic set of 'rules'. Others go further in time and become more formalised. Whatever suits you! See the [Firm Foundations](#) guide for advice on how you can work in partnership.





#### **4. What is unique about your high street?**

Every high street and town has something different about it that makes it great – you might be near a local landmark, have the best Chinese restaurants or some great street art. Think about what makes you different and build on it. Don't forget to ask what your customers think! What do they like about your high street? What don't they like? What do they want more of? And how could you get them that? That will help you start to create a distinct identity for your area.

#### **5. Volunteers**

Don't underestimate the commitment that your customers have to their communities. For instance Norwich Lanes trained up scores of local people to act as tourist information points, giving up their free time to help visitors to the city and they even won [an award](#) for it!

Why not approach a local group and see if they want to help you to pick up litter or put on an event? This way you will also start to find people with skills you can use like people good with accounts, PR, project management and social media.

#### **6. Talk to your local schools and community groups**

Your customers want their high streets to be at the heart of their local communities. What about talking to your local school about how you could work together to support your community? Could you display art made by the children or offer training to their students? And what about your local community groups? How could they help?

#### **7. Don't underestimate the importance of making your high street look nice.**

Local people value small, low cost changes, such as brightening up a shop front or making sure the road is clean. Better looking high streets = busier high streets.

#### **8. Evidence!**

Understanding your high street is key to understanding how to help it. But that doesn't have to be complicated. Why not try counting the number of people walking down it at different times of the day – what does it tell you? What type of customers are you attracting and when? Where are the gaps and what could you do to resolve them? The *Understanding Neighbourhood and Town Trends* guide in this toolkit is a great start.

#### **9. Work with your local council**

Your local council wants to support local retailers as it makes their areas better places to be. Why not think about meeting with their regeneration team to share your ideas? To make a difference it has to be a team effort.

## 10. Think about your online presence

Many people think the internet is not for them or only for big shops. But more and more of your customers use smart phones and social media and are looking for new ways to shop and interact with their local communities. Twitter is full of people talking about your area – why not join in? Small independents are using Twitter and Facebook to advertise their wares and places like Bishy Road in York have transformed their area through branding and a really strong [online presence](#). And all while not forgetting their customers that don't use the internet (they've just installed a lovely new noticeboard!).



These are just a few ideas – there are loads of online guides crammed full of more ideas and examples of great local initiatives – see the [High Street Portal](#) for a start.

Good luck!

Images by Duncan Brown and Kevin Smith

