



Conversation

Aberdeenshire

Café

# Aberdeenshire Conversation Cafés Guidance template



## What is a conversation café?

The initial café was setup in Aberdeenshire as part of the Mental Health Foundation's mental health week to support positive mental wellbeing. Since 2014 new conversation Cafés have begun in other areas in Aberdeenshire they are about building new connections within your community to support positive wellbeing. Most importantly they are open free spaces to engage with other folk.



## Who are they for?

Everyone! Older people, people in recovery from addiction or mental health issues, parents with children, anyone who is isolated, anyone with specific needs e.g., learning difficulties, young people. An organisation may host one for their own clients or open it up to wider public to come along.

## Who can host a Café?

Anyone as above! Most important – it should be run by the group/ people for the group/ people, making them as inclusive and as welcoming as possible.

## What do you need?

Access to a big enough space, tea/ coffee etc and volunteers! Volunteers are the mainstay of Cafés. You will need them to set up, make tea, chat and most important, clear up. You also need to be able to promote the café in your area and maybe on social media. The Conversation café network have template posters you can use and there is an Aberdeenshire pop up conversation café Facebook page you can share your Cafés too [https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100066670425641&\\_\\_tn\\_\\_=%3C](https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100066670425641&__tn__=%3C)

## What are the benefits?

To bring together people for social chat over a cuppa! No format, no specific criteria just a group with a common interest. It has been long recognised that having a chat/ blether/ conversation is a great way to address issues – mental health or otherwise. You can name it as you wish!

## Where to hold one?

In a church, community hall, within an organisation meeting area or a local café that has extra space. Be mindful of the capacity of the venue you are using. You might wish to keep it as a small event to allow safe spaces for talking in which case you might need to put a booking system in place and provide somewhere more private.

## Why set one up?

If it is identified as a need or gap in the community or among a group who may feel isolated and want to come to a café to make new connections of support. Feedback from people who attend the Cafés shows they make a difference to them in their community and it is great to see similar faces coming along on a regular basis.

## How often?

Frequency – Depends on how many volunteers you have so maybe start once a month to see who comes along. It depends on how often you can get a venue and volunteers and costs. Don't be too ambitious and keep it simple!

## What else may you need?

Guidance, support from other café hosts to share ideas of how they did it. The Aberdeenshire conversation café support network meet up to share ideas quarterly, they can give you examples of what they do in their Cafés. Maybe access to some training for volunteers e.g. food hygiene.

You may need start-up funding – there are a number of sources you can apply to which can be used for anything from contributing to venue hire to buying refreshments and washing up liquid. Add info re Aberdeenshire Voluntary Action other suggestions..

Which comes first the group or the venue – probably a group. The Aberdeenshire conversation café network can offer support/ideas with finding a venue.

Organisations to help signpost people to attend so ask who may be to share promotional material.

## How much should I charge?

Cafés can run very successfully on a donation only basis but charges might need to be made to pay for the overheads of the venue or transport, if required.



## What else may be useful to know?

Each year the Aberdeenshire Conversation Café network host a big gathering event to bring all the café groups together during the Aberdeenshire Wellbeing Festival. This is open to local groups to attend and is a fun day out to meet other café groups from other areas in Aberdeenshire.



## Who are 'we'?

### The Aberdeenshire Conversation Café Network

You can access a map of where existing Cafés are and who to contact for more information.

You can also contact local support via the Aberdeenshire Public Health team in your area for ideas/information about Cafés in your area or email:

Gram.[southpublichealth@nhs.scot](mailto:southpublichealth@nhs.scot)

Gram.[centralpublichealth@nhs.scot](mailto:centralpublichealth@nhs.scot)

Gram.[northpublichealth@nhs.scot](mailto:northpublichealth@nhs.scot)





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