

Regular Giving

How to set up a monthly giving scheme

Securing monthly donations by direct debit can be a sustainable way to grow your group's income. A regular giving scheme is relatively easy to set up and manage, can bring in a significant and stable sum each month and creates a community of loyal supporters.

However, it is a *slow drip* method that can take time to see real results and needs consistent attention from a staff member or volunteer. Read our guide to decide if regular giving is right for your group, and for ideas on how to get started.

1. Decide how you will collect donations

You will need a way for supporters to give to you automatically each month. Do your own research before you decide. Options include:

- **Via an online giving platform** such as JustGiving, Virgin Money Giving, Local Giving. This is quick and easy to set up and a good place to start. You can share the donation link on your website, e-newsletters, social media pages etc. The downsides are that donors go to the platform to donate, rather than donating on your website and the platform usually takes a percentage of each donation.
- **Via your website.** There are several options for taking donations on your website, so that donors don't have to visit a third-party site:
 - You could set up a merchant account with a bank, that enables you to take credit/debit card donations via your website that go directly into your bank account.
 - You could use a payment processor such as Paypal, Rapidata or GoCardless that takes and processes donations for a fee - you will then need to link this payment system to the donation page on your website.
 - Some online giving platforms enable you to integrate their payment pages into your website so that donors can donate from your site, rather than clicking away from it. Examples include CAF Donate or Charity Checkout.
- **Give out your group's bank details** and ask donors to set up their own direct debits. This saves you money as there is no fee to pay. However, it's considered old fashioned, is more time-consuming for the donor and you may get fewer donations this way.
- **Through Payroll Giving** – If you have links with businesses, you could invite their employees to donate directly from their pay each month. The company will need to set this scheme up on your behalf.

2. Decide on suggested donation amounts

Most online donation sites allow you to set suggested amounts for monthly giving. Consider your prospective donors, what could they afford and want to give each month? If your existing or target supporters are on average incomes it's best to start low. If your prospective supporters are in higher income brackets, you can raise the suggested amount.

- Many larger charities with successful schemes set donations at £3, £5, £10 or £15 a month to engage new donors. They also occasionally contact donors with special campaigns, encouraging them to make additional one-off gifts.
- When setting your suggested amounts, think strategically about your fundraising targets e.g. If you want to raise £3,000 during the first year of your scheme, you'll need to sign up 50 people giving £5 per month for the whole year; or 83 people at £3 a month; or 25 people at £10 per month... and so on.
- You can always change your suggested monthly amounts. Many larger charities raise and lower these them periodically to test donors' capacity to give.

Design a VIP option

If you're targeting higher-level donors including corporate donors, you could offer an additional incentive for giving to you e.g., an exclusive community / club for those who give larger monthly amounts.

Members of this VIP club could receive a special thank you phone call or meeting with your Chair or other benefits just for them. Higher level and corporate donors often like chances to meet and network with others at their level. Consider if a VIP option is something you can offer at the start of your scheme or at a later date.

3. Produce your marketing copy

You'll need compelling communications that persuade prospective donors to sign up. Have a look at the websites of larger charities to see how they sell their regular giving schemes. Your marketing copy can include:

- A short statement telling donors about the difference they could help to make.
- A shopping list of suggested amounts and what their monthly donation can help to buy e.g., £3 a month will help pay for...
- Case studies of at least one person you've helped or a difference you've made.
- The message that by giving monthly, they can help you sustain your work and make a difference to many more LGBT+ people's lives.
- Clear instructions for how to give and what will happen after they've signed up.
- Your Data Protection statement – remember that donors will have to opt in to receive additional communications / marketing information from you. **If they haven't opted in, you cannot add them to mailing lists or contact them for any other reason than administering their donation.**

4. Publicise your scheme

You'll need to put regular time into publicising your scheme to keep new donors signing up. Make your regular giving scheme a key communications message that everyone in your group helps to spread.

Invite your Trustees to sign up to regular giving themselves and to tell others about it. If appropriate, tell your service users and ex-servicers about your scheme – many of them are keen to give something back or they may encourage others to give.

Enthuse prospective donors about your work and *invite* them to support you. Do not engage in hard sell – donors need to feel excited and positive about giving to you, not pressured and guilt-tripped into it.

5. Keep in touch with donors

Your donors are precious! Give them special treatment or at least try not to neglect them. Once a donor is signed up, you need to keep them engaged and interested in your work. If you ignore them, they may drift away. Within a few days of a donor signing up, send a personal thank you email or make a phone call if they are higher level donors.

Invite them to sign up to your communications e.g., an e-newsletter, or to receive your annual report and event invitations. There are lots of online options for sending e-news. Mailchimp is widely used in the sector as it's free if you have fewer than 2,000 subscribers. Invest some time in learning how to produce great newsletters and schedule at least one e-newsletter per month. You may want to send two separate versions, one to prospective donors and one to those who already give.

6. Keep good records!

You'll need a system for keeping track of donation details. Online giving sites enable you to download regular reports. It's advisable you do this at least once a month and reconcile the amounts with your bank statements.

Your Treasurer will also need this info to claim GiftAid. To run your scheme strategically, you could set up your records so you can track how long a donor has been giving for, how much they've given, the contact you've had with them, their GiftAid status etc. This will also enable you predict your income year by year and set your targets.

Remember that you cannot store any information on a donor that they have not provided permission for. You'll also need to periodically check with donors that their information is up to date. You could use Excel for your donor records initially, but as your income grows you may want to consider researching options for a paid-for donor database.

Remember, you'll need to keep donor data **very** safe! If you're setting up a regular giving scheme, then producing a **Data Management Policy** is a good idea if you don't already have one.