

# QUICK GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY ASSETS TRANSFER

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## Introduction

Rotherham Council recognises how successful Community Asset Transfers can deliver strong, resilient and empowered communities; where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others, while providing solutions to issues within their own community.

The Council has a proven track record of supporting communities within the Borough via Community Asset Transfer and is seeking to further enhance this relationship moving forward.

This guide is aimed at individuals, community groups, voluntary and third sector organisations working at a neighbourhood or community level.

We understand that embarking on a Community Asset Transfer can seem a daunting and possibly an overwhelming process. This handy guide is intended to help you understand what is involved in taking over and running a community asset and is here to help cut through some of the jargon.

## What is Community Asset Transfer?

At its simplest level, Community Asset Transfer is the transfer of the management and/or ownership of publically owned land and/or buildings to a community, voluntary or third sector organisation at less than best consideration.

There are a number of transfer options, but most commonly community groups take management responsibility for the asset by way of a lease or licence to occupy.

As well as taking over the day to day running of the building or land, any group entering in to a Community Asset Transfer would also be responsible for its ongoing repairs, maintenance and management.

## Jargon Buster

We appreciate the Community Asset Transfer process can be full of jargon, so we devised the following list to hopefully provide a no-nonsense definition of the most commonly used terms:-

- **Asset** – in the context of this document asset refers to building and/or land.
- **Business Plan** – it should paint a picture of what you plan to achieve and demonstrate the financial and operational viability of your proposal
- **Expression of Interest** – initial submission outlining your interest in the asset and your proposals for it.
- **Feasibility** – the ability of the project to meet its objectives, given its context and the resources available
- **Governance** – the arrangement you have in place for managing and reporting
- **Safeguarding** – the plan(s) you have place to ensure you keep users safe
- **Sustainability** – the means to deliver the community project in the long term
- **Viability** – the ability of an asset to cover all its costs with income over a specified period.

## What are the benefits of Community Asset Transfer?

Rotherham Council clearly recognises, in its Community Asset Transfer Policy, the wide reaching benefits the process can bring to the community and the Council.

### For the community:

- Facilities and services that are more responsive to local needs
- Improved and increased community offering
- Improved management of buildings
- Likely additional investment from external funding sources not available to the Council
- Acts as a catalyst for regeneration and economic growth
- Greater ownership and pride in the facility
- Empowered local communities
- Decision making devolved to a neighbourhood level
- Encourages community participation in activities

### For the Council:

- Improved relationships with the local community
- Supporting delivery of the Council's corporate aims and objectives
- Likely revenue and capital spend savings
- Improved services
- Delivers shared objectives and priorities

## Community Asset Transfer Flow Chart

Although there are a number of steps involved in Community Asset Transfer, which are identified below, there are three key stages to those individuals or groups who are interested.

	Council declare asset is surplus to requirements and is suitable for potential Community Asset Transfer
<b>Stage 1</b>	Submit Expression of Interest
	Panel review Expression of Interest(s) and make recommendation to Asset Management Board
	Asset Management Board review recommendation and decide if Community Asset Transfer can progress to next stage
<b>Stage 2</b>	Submit Full Application and Business Case
	Panel evaluate Full Application(s) and Business Case(s) via Community Asset Transfer Matrix and make recommendation to Asset Management Board.
	Asset Management Board review recommendation and support if Community Asset Transfer can progress to next stage
<b>Stage 3</b>	Agree Heads of Terms for the transfer and the basis for the Joint Working Agreement
	Legal completion of lease and Joint Working Agreement and handover of the asset to the successful organisation

## Are you ready for Community Asset Transfer?

Consider your reasons and motivations for considering a Community Asset Transfer, as the process progresses you will need to demonstrate to the Council how you will achieve your objectives.

The business case you submit will be a key part of the evaluation process and will assist the Council in assessing your proposal. It should ideally paint a picture of what you plan to achieve; backed up with evidence collated from market research and consultation with the local community.

As a minimum requirement it should address the following points:

### Aims and objectives

You will be expected to have clear evidence that you understand what the community needs and provide details of what activities, services, events etc. that you plan to deliver from the asset.

#### Tips:

- Go and see other similar projects elsewhere. Talk to managers of services and facilities that offer similar activities to the ones you have in mind.
- Look at the existing services on offer from the premises and identify opportunities to build on these.

### Experience, expertise and capacity

Do you possess the necessary experience, expertise and capacity to deliver the proposed service?

#### Tips:

- Consider if you can deliver as you are or if you need new skills or knowledge.
- Do you have sufficient capacity or do you need to consider recruiting staff and/or volunteers

### Feasibility

Taking responsibility of a community asset is a substantial commitment. Do you have the financial resources in place to not only manage the day to day running of the facility, but to also meet the insurance and repair/maintenance liabilities for the asset (both internally and externally).

#### Tips:

- Find out what external funding may be available to you.
- Identify a number of different income streams e.g. income from room bookings, memberships etc.

### Governance

Good governance is a vital part of how community organisations operates and are held accountable for what they do. Before Rotherham Council agrees to a Community Asset Transfer we will need evidence of the sustainability of your organisation.

#### Tips:

- Consider your legal structure – do you have a governing document (Constitution, Articles and Memorandum of Understanding etc.)
- Do you have defined management and staffing structure with individuals having clear understanding their roles and responsibilities

### Safeguarding

You will be expected to show how you plan to keep users safe and meet legal requirements. Before entering in to a Community Asset Transfer you will need to provide details of your safeguarding policy and demonstrate how it meets the Council's own safeguarding principles.

#### Tips:

- Consider how the asset can be managed to be accessible to all sections of the community.
- How could you contribute to making the community feels safe and promote understanding.
- Consider how you will actively eliminate discrimination, promote equal opportunity and foster good relationships with the whole community.