SOCIAL INNOVATION CIC

# Small Steps Confidence Building and Empowerment Programme

A practical eight week facilitator and participant pack

## Small steps create big changes.

A welcoming group programme for adults who want to rebuild confidence, feel connected, practise useful skills and help shape solutions in their community. People can begin exactly where they are. Each week offers a choice of ways to take part and one manageable action to try.

Delivery draft • September 2026

Eight weekly sessions of two hours • Suggested group size 8–12 • Flexible six week adaptation possible

Social Innovation CIC • Prevention Is the Cure

# What the programme is for

Small Steps supports adults experiencing low confidence, isolation, caring pressure, anxiety, bereavement, difficult experiences or barriers to taking part in community life. It welcomes people without a diagnosis, qualification or employment history. The programme is a supportive learning and co-design space, not therapy or a substitute for specialist care.

## The change we hope to see

- People recognise strengths and name what matters to them.
- People feel more comfortable asking for help, speaking up and trying practical tasks.
- People build supportive connections and choose a realistic next step.
- The CIC hears what local people say is missing and records what it changes in response.

## What empowerment means here

Participants choose their goals, pace and degree of sharing. They may leave with a new connection, a completed form, a boundary they can voice, an idea for improving a service, or simply the confidence to return next week. None of those outcomes requires employment as the end point.

## Ways to take part

Speaking, drawing, writing, pairing up, observing and taking a quiet break are equally valid. Offer printed materials, large text and an option to talk privately. No one is required to tell a personal story.

# Delivery model and preparation

| Before the first group | Action |
|---|---|
| 4–6 weeks | Agree venue, accessibility, target group, referral route and delivery partner. |
| 3–4 weeks | Confirm two facilitators, safeguarding lead, insurance, resources, travel and childcare support where funded. |
| 2 weeks | Offer a friendly check-in and ask what would make attendance easier. |
| 1 week | Prepare accessible handouts, optional name labels, activity choices and local support contacts. |

## Group agreement

• Confidentiality: respect privacy, while facilitators explain when they must share a safety concern.

• Choice: passing, stepping outside or using a different activity is always allowed.

• Respect: no interruption, pressure to disclose, judgment or unsolicited advice.

• Accessibility: ask for changes when something does not work.

## Facilitator roles

One person leads the session and timekeeping. A second welcomes late arrivals, offers quiet support, notices access needs and follows the agreed safety procedure. Both document only what is needed for delivery and consented evaluation.

## Safeguarding and boundaries

Explain the named safeguarding contact and urgent escalation route at the start. If someone describes immediate danger, follow the organisation’s safeguarding procedure and relevant emergency route. Do not promise secrecy. Seek consent for routine onward introductions and avoid collecting detailed trauma accounts in group activities.

# The eight week journey

| Week | Focus | Takeaway |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Starting where I am | A personal goal and group agreement |
| 2 | Strengths I already have | My strengths card |
| 3 | Handling self doubt | A small coping toolkit |
| 4 | Finding my voice | A conversation or boundary script |
| 5 | Everyday and digital confidence | One useful task practised |
| 6 | Trying something together | A creative or community challenge |
| 7 | Turning experience into change | An idea and a next step |
| 8 | Celebrating and continuing | A progress reflection and support route |

## A familiar rhythm for each two hour session

| Part | Time | Purpose |
|---|---|---|
| Welcome and choice | 10 min | Settle in; show activity options. |
| Check-in | 15 min | Share a word, colour, picture or pass. |
| Explore and play | 35 min | Low pressure activity in pairs or small groups. |
| Break | 10 min | Refreshments and quiet space. |
| Practise and make | 35 min | Try a real task or create something useful. |
| Reflect and step | 15 min | Choose one tiny action for the week. |

# Week 1 Starting where I am

## Build safety, choice and a first small goal.

### Welcome and check-in

Choose a picture card or colour for how arriving today feels; passing is fine.

### Explore and play

Co-create the group agreement using sticky notes. Invite each person to make a “starting point map”: what helps, what makes things harder and one thing they want more of.

### Practise and make

Offer three ways to set a goal: write it, draw it or tell a facilitator privately. Make the goal small enough to attempt this week.

### Listen and co-design

“What would make this group feel easier to come back to?” Capture suggestions visibly.

### My small step

Try one ten minute action chosen by the participant.

### What to keep

Baseline: optional 1–10 confidence and belonging ratings; record the chosen goal with consent.

Facilitator prompt: What choice or adjustment would help this person take part comfortably next time?

# Week 2 Strengths I already have

## Kitchen Curiosity: familiar food, unexpected ideas

A two-hour session using everyday cooking choices to notice planning, creativity and problem-solving. The accompanying PowerPoint is a 30-minute activity within this session.

### Welcome and choice - 10 minutes

Offer talk, write, draw, watch or pass. Ask about access needs and ingredient preferences. Participation does not require cooking or tasting.

### Check-in - 15 minutes

Share one thing managed this week, or use a fictional example. Ask: what skill helped? Making a meal, adapting a recipe and asking for help all offer starting points.

### Explore and play - 35 minutes

Use the Kitchen Curiosity PowerPoint, slides 1-9 (25 minutes), then discuss strengths for 10 minutes. Explore the milk-and-lemon swap, an omelette in a mug and the banana dessert puzzle. Keep slides 10-14 for the closing reflection.

### Break - 10 minutes

Offer refreshments and a quiet space. Check any ingredient information before offering food.

### Practise and make - 35 minutes

Choose a sweet or savoury idea. Make a recipe plan or flavour card, then adapt it when an ingredient or appliance is unavailable. Optionally ask AI for an alternative and check it. Identify one strength used and add it to the participant's strengths card.

### Reflect and step - 15 minutes

Use PowerPoint slides 10-14 for the five-minute quiz and reveal, then allow ten minutes for personal reflection. Ask: what surprised me, what helped me think differently, and what small step do I choose?

### Listen and co-design

Ask which everyday skills services overlook, and what practical or digital support people want next. Record anonymous themes. Keep a strengths card and an optional chosen step, with consent.

Detailed activity cards, safe substitutions, quiz and sources: pages 18-21. Learning purpose: everyday thinking and confidence, with no claim to repair brain injury.

# Week 3 Handling self doubt

## Build a practical response to setbacks.

### Welcome and check-in

Use a weather symbol to describe energy today.

### Explore and play

Sort example thoughts into “helpful”, “unhelpful” and “it depends”; discuss what a kinder, believable response could sound like. Avoid asking for personal trauma stories.

### Practise and make

Create a pocket coping menu: pause, breathe, text someone, take a break, ask for information or seek specialist help. Rehearse one option.

### Listen and co-design

“When does a service make people feel judged, and what would help instead?”

### My small step

Use one coping option in an everyday moment, if useful.

### What to keep

A coping menu; facilitator notes any support request through the agreed route.

Facilitator prompt: What choice or adjustment would help this person take part comfortably next time?

# Week 4 Finding my voice

## Practise asking for what is needed and setting boundaries.

### Welcome and check-in

Pick a communication style card: in person, phone, email, text or supported conversation.

### Explore and play

Try low stakes role plays with clear opt-in: asking for an appointment, requesting an adjustment, or saying “I need time to think.” Offer observer or script writer roles.

### Practise and make

Write a three-line script: what is happening, what I need and what happens next. Practise with a partner only if chosen.

### Listen and co-design

“What makes it hard to be heard locally?” Let people submit anonymously.

### My small step

Use or refine the script for a real conversation; observation alone counts.

### What to keep

A conversation plan the participant controls.

Facilitator prompt: What choice or adjustment would help this person take part comfortably next time?

# Week 5 Everyday and digital confidence

## Complete one useful everyday task with support.

### Welcome and check-in

Show task cards and invite participants to choose: email, call, online form, appointment, saving a file or finding reliable information.

### Explore and play

Run rotating stations, including a paper based option. Demonstrate one task slowly; allow practice with dummy information. Never ask for passwords or sensitive details.

### Practise and make

Each person practises a chosen task, with a buddy or facilitator if helpful. Offer the separate Digital First Steps course for more support.

### Listen and co-design

“Which services assume everyone is already confident online?”

### My small step

Repeat a task on their own device only if comfortable.

### What to keep

One completed practice task or an agreed support plan.

Facilitator prompt: What choice or adjustment would help this person take part comfortably next time?

# Week 6 Trying something together

## Make connection through a playful shared challenge.

### Welcome and check-in

Vote on a group activity from accessible options.

### Explore and play

Choose a mini project such as a community kindness map, a collage of local strengths, an easy recipe plan, a photo walk or a pop up ideas board. Offer seated and low sensory alternatives.

### Practise and make

Share roles by preference: making, organising, drawing, speaking, documenting or observing. Celebrate cooperation rather than performance.

### Listen and co-design

“What could we change in this room or neighbourhood with one small action?”

### My small step

Invite someone to contribute one idea or resource if they wish.

### What to keep

A shared output and reflection on what each person contributed.

Facilitator prompt: What choice or adjustment would help this person take part comfortably next time?

# Week 7 Turning experience into change

## Connect personal progress with community voice and a realistic next step.

### Welcome and check-in

Acknowledge one thing each person tried, including coming back.

### Explore and play

Use “keep, change, create” cards to identify what works locally, what gets in the way and an achievable idea. Group similar ideas without claiming they represent everyone.

### Practise and make

Create a next step menu: community group, learning, volunteering, peer role, practical support or a rest and recovery goal. Ask permission before any referral.

### Listen and co-design

Vote on ideas to explore; document who will review them and when participants will hear back.

### My small step

Choose one next step and a person or place that can help.

### What to keep

A personally chosen plan plus an anonymised co-design record.

Facilitator prompt: What choice or adjustment would help this person take part comfortably next time?

# Week 8 Celebrating and continuing

## Recognise progress and close the group well.

### Welcome and check-in

Revisit each person’s first goal, privately or in pairs. Passing remains welcome.

### Explore and play

Make a “before, now, next” card. Invite a celebration of attempts, connection and learning; avoid public ranking or compulsory speeches.

### Practise and make

Offer certificates for participation, optional introductions and a 4–6 week follow-up check-in. Invite feedback using words, drawings or anonymous cards.

### Listen and co-design

Show the “you said, we will explore” list and how the CIC will report back.

### My small step

A chosen continuation step with an agreed check-in route.

### What to keep

Final confidence and belonging ratings, feedback and consented follow-up plan.

Facilitator prompt: What choice or adjustment would help this person take part comfortably next time?

# Engagement toolkit

A session should feel useful and enjoyable without demanding disclosure, competitive performance or constant positivity. Give participants a choice of activity and a predictable structure.

## Simple activities that travel across weeks

• Choice cards: “talk”, “write”, “draw”, “watch” and “take a break” cards let people participate at their own pace.

• Small wins wall: anonymous sticky notes record attempts as well as results. Read aloud only with permission.

• Strengths bingo: prompts such as “helped someone” or “solved a problem” reveal everyday skills. No winner is needed.

• Challenge jar: people suggest safe ten minute tasks; the group votes on one to try together.

• Idea tokens: give each person two tokens to mark the changes they want explored; make an anonymous route available.

• Progress passport: one small step per week, with space for “I changed my mind” and “I need help”.

## Accessibility check

Use plain language, read instructions aloud, print in large type where needed, avoid compulsory icebreakers and plan a quiet area. Ask about sensory, mobility, language, literacy, travel and childcare needs before the group starts. Offer more than one way to contribute.

# Participant page My small steps

Name or chosen initials: _____ Date: _____

## What matters to me right now

_____

_____

## One thing I already do well

_____

## One small goal I choose

_____

## My step this week

_____

## What could get in the way and what might help

_____

_____

## Who or what could support me

_____

## After trying it

What happened? _____

What would I change next time? _____

It is fine to change a goal, pause or ask for help. The participant owns this page.

# Participant page Confidence and belonging check

Use at week 1 and week 8. The facilitator can read these questions aloud. Ratings are optional; words or drawings are also welcome.

### Today I feel able to try one manageable new thing

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 or my own words: _____

### Today I feel able to ask for help or say what I need

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 or my own words: _____

### Today I feel connected to people or places around me

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 or my own words: _____

### Something that would help me take part

_____

### At the end of the programme

The change I noticed: _____

The next step I choose: _____

How I want to hear about future opportunities: _____

## Listening into action

Small Steps is also a way to hear what people experience and co-design practical responses. Keep participation voluntary and avoid turning personal stories into public case studies without specific consent.

| Stage | What the facilitator does |
|---|---|
| Listen | Collect anonymous themes and voluntary ideas during each week. Separate direct quotes from facilitator interpretation. |
| Check | Ask participants whether the summary reflects what they meant. Include disagreement and missing perspectives. |
| Decide | Agree which ideas the CIC or a partner can test, who owns the action and a realistic review date. |
| Report back | Use a simple “you said, we did or could not do” update to the group, including reasons and next steps. |

### A workable first pilot

Start with one cohort of 8–12 adults over eight weeks. After delivery, review attendance, access barriers, participant chosen progress, group feedback and co-design actions. Adapt the next cohort with participants, including anyone who wants an appropriately supported peer role. Do not claim the programme has proven impact before it is evaluated.

# Evaluation and follow-up

Success is meaningful progress from a participant's own starting point. Report both numbers and participant feedback, while recognising that a small pilot cannot show long term impact by itself.

| Question | Evidence to collect |
|---|---|
| Did people feel welcome? | Optional feedback after week 1; accessibility changes made. |
| Did confidence or connection change? | Optional week 1 and week 8 ratings plus participants' own words. |
| Did people try a useful step? | Participant owned goal and voluntary completion/reflection. |
| Were ideas acted on? | Anonymous theme log and dated "you said, we did" record. |
| Did support continue? | Consented introductions and optional 4–6 week follow-up. |

## Facilitator closing checklist

• Offer a private final reflection and confirm any agreed support or referral.

• Ask consent before contacting someone after the programme.

• Store only necessary records under the CIC's approved data process.

• Write a short report within two weeks: reach, adjustments, outcomes, limitations and recommended changes.

• Contact consenting participants four to six weeks later to ask whether their chosen next step still fits.

## Before recruiting

Confirm delivery location, intended participants, partner, start date, trained facilitators, safeguarding route and a realistic budget. Then tailor this pack with the people who will use it.

# Week 2 activity guide

## Kitchen Curiosity - facilitator extension

### A familiar starting point

Invite people to name a food they enjoy making or eating. Choose from pancakes with fruit, scones with jam, a cheesy omelette, a banana sundae or a colourful wrap. These are choices, not a prescribed menu.

### One skill hidden inside an everyday task

Measuring can show attention to detail. Choosing a substitute can show adaptability. Putting steps in order can show planning. Explaining a choice can show communication. Ask the participant which description fits, rather than assigning a judgement.

### PowerPoint running order

0-6 minutes: the missing-buttermilk puzzle and reveal.
6-9: the mug omelette idea.
9-12: the banana sequence puzzle.
12-19: a flavour basket and a no-cooker twist.
19-23: compare your idea with an AI alternative.
23-25: spot an unsafe cooking claim.
25-30: a three-question quiz, answer reveal and personal reflection.

### Sweet challenge

Choose pancakes, scones or a banana dessert. Plan the flavour and topping using suitable ingredients. Identify the equipment, complete recipe and any ingredient checks needed. The planning task works without a kitchen.

### Savoury challenge

Choose a wrap with cheese, washed chopped tomato and ready-to-eat canned sweetcorn, or suitable alternatives. Give it a name. Ask how to make it work without a cooker. A hot pizza-style version needs a complete tested recipe.

### Human idea first, AI second

Invite the participant's idea before any screen share. Example prompt: “Suggest a simple alternative to my snack using ready-to-eat ingredients. I have no cooker.” Discuss whether the reply follows the instructions. Keep private information out and independently check recipe and safety details.

### Participation and progress

Offer large print, written steps and no timed competition. Pause when needed. Notice trying an idea, adapting a plan or asking for help. Collect voluntary feedback, not neurological scores. Use only the information needed for the programme.

# Fresh swaps for familiar favourites

An ingredient missing does not always end the plan

### Pancakes or scones: fresh buttermilk substitute

Mix **250 ml fresh whole or semi-skimmed milk** with **1 tablespoon lemon juice**. Leave for **5-10 minutes**, then use in a suitable tested recipe [1]. This is acidified fresh milk, not spoiled milk. It will not be identical to cultured buttermilk. Check the milk's use-by date and storage instructions. Adding lemon does not rescue milk that has gone off.

### No lemon? Another recipe-guided option

Good Food also gives milk with vinegar as an alternative: 250 ml whole or semi-skimmed milk with 1 tablespoon white or apple cider vinegar, left for 5-10 minutes [2]. Use the chosen recipe's guidance and required quantity.

### Yoghurt already in the fridge?

For another buttermilk substitute, Good Food suggests 200 ml plain yoghurt with 50 ml milk or water if needed [2]. This is for an appropriate recipe, not a guaranteed swap in every dish. The guide gives a different ratio for thick Greek yoghurt.

### No hob: an omelette in a mug

A published microwave veggie omelette uses a microwave-safe mug [3]. Follow the complete recipe and check the food is properly cooked. Choose fillings you like. A paper planning version is equally valid.

### Banana sundae: a different method

Prepare peeled banana pieces, freeze them, then blend with milk to the texture in the linked recipe [4]. Try a topping you enjoy and can safely eat. Freezing takes time before the activity, and equipment must suit frozen food.

### Optional extra: a meringue without egg whites

A tested meringue recipe uses chickpea liquid (aquafaba) with sugar instead of egg whites [5]. It is a specific baking example, not a universal egg substitute. You can discuss the idea without cooking it.

Numbers [1]-[5] link to the recipes on page 21. These are ingredient methods and activity ideas, not complete recipes. Follow full instructions and individual dietary needs.

# My kitchen ideas and reflection

Write, draw, discuss or keep this page private

## My creation

I would like to make or plan: _____

The flavours I would choose: _____

An ingredient or appliance I could adapt: _____

## My strengths

A skill I used today: _____

What helped me take part: _____

## Short quiz - no scores needed

**1. Which pair makes our fresh buttermilk substitute?**
A. Water and oil  B. Fresh milk and lemon juice
C. Flour and water  D. Sugar and melted butter

**2. Which order fits our frozen banana dessert?**
A. Blend, freeze, peel  B. Freeze, blend, peel
C. Peel and cut, freeze, blend  D. Blend, peel, freeze

**3. AI suggests an unfamiliar cooking tip. What should I do?**
A. Trust its confidence  B. Skip the packet instructions
C. Copy it unchecked  D. Check a trusted recipe and safety guidance

## My reflection

What surprised me? _____

What helped me think differently? _____

One small step I choose: _____

You may change your mind, ask for support or choose no homework.

# Answers, safety and sources

## Facilitator reference - checked 13 October 2026

### Quiz reveal

1: B. Fresh milk and lemon juice are the pair in the example.
2: C. Prepare the banana, freeze it, then blend.
3: D. A confident AI answer does not verify a recipe's safety.

### Before any practical cooking

Start with discussion and planning. Cooking or tasting requires suitable facilities, supervision and the organisation's agreed arrangements. Check ingredient labels, allergies, use-by dates and equipment instructions. Use full tested recipes. Follow relevant individual clinical advice, including any swallowing or dietary requirements. Do not taste raw batter or use spoiled milk.


[1] Good Food team. Homemade buttermilk. Date not shown. Open source

[2] Good Food team. 6 best buttermilk substitutes. Date not shown. Open source

[3] MedlinePlus/Food Hero. Veggie Omelet in a Mug. Updated 10 June 2021. Open source

[4] Good Food team. Quick banana ice cream. June 2011. Open source

[5] Barney Desmazery, Good Food. Vegan meringues. June 2017. Open source

[6] Food Standards Agency. Cooking your food. 18 December 2017. Open source

[7] GOV.UK. Best before and use-by dates. Date not shown. Open source

[8] NCSC. AI and cyber security: what you need to know. Date not verified. Open source


### What this session can claim

It is designed to practise everyday thinking, creativity and confidence. The programme has not established that these activities repair grey matter or brain injury. Evaluate participant experience and chosen goals, without presenting the quiz as a clinical test.

Integration update: 13 October 2026. Earlier programme pages remain the original delivery draft. Recipe dates can be older, so follow current product instructions and official safety guidance.