



Everything you need to know about affiliating with Community Savers!

1. What is Community Savers?

Community Savers is a network of women-led and neighbourhood-based community groups and community networks working to reduce poverty and inequality in their local area, and by working together across neighbourhood boundaries. At present, Community Savers has affiliated groups and networks based in Manchester, Stockport and Sheffield.

You can find out everything you need to know about Community Savers by visiting our website www.communitysavers.net and reading through our “News”, “About”, and “Watch” pages. The best way to find out more is by inviting some of the leaders to visit your group: we call this a community exchange.

Community Savers is a movement not an organisation. The organisations are the community groups and networks who choose to affiliate with Community Savers and also work together with a support agency called Community Led Action and Savings Support (CLASS).

Community Savers has been inspired by an international women-led movement called Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) which has affiliates in 32 countries across the Global South (www.sdinet.org). The alliance between the Community Savers leadership and CLASS is also an adaptation of alliances between community federations and support agencies in SDI-affiliated movements.

2. What does it mean to affiliate with Community Savers?

You can affiliate with Community Savers by reading and signing the Community Savers Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This would need to be a collective decision made by the committee of your group/network. There are also some steps to follow including meeting with the Leadership Group who need to ensure there is capacity to support new affiliations.

Affiliating means that you would like to engage in peer support with community leaders based in other neighbourhoods to share ideas, experience and expertise through community learning exchanges and participation in Community Savers network activities and events.

Affiliating also means that your committee shares the same goals as other Community Savers affiliates which is to improve the lives of women, families, and people of all ages and backgrounds in your local community. In particular, it means

that you are committed to working together with other people to address poverty and inequality in your community and across your town, city or city-region.

The most common way in which Community Savers leaders come together is through quarterly Community Savers meetings. Each group sends representatives from their committee to participate in a meeting somewhere in Greater Manchester or Sheffield. At the meeting, leaders share ideas, make plans and decisions together, and learn about particular themes or issues.

3. What kinds of groups or networks is affiliation open to?

Community Savers community groups affiliates are:

- i) neighbourhood-based and focused on improving lives within a particular urban locality (within one neighbourhood of a town, city, or borough).
- ii) majority women-led: groups are inclusive of people with other gender identities, but there must be a majority of women leaders on the committee.
- iii) joined together by a shared commitment to achieving greater social justice for people living in lower-income areas of their towns and cities.
- iv) ready to become constituted and open a bank account as part of the process of affiliation if these are not already in place.

Community Savers neighbourhood network affiliates are:

- i) neighbourhood-based membership networks with a membership of resident-led community groups focused on improving lives within a particular urban locality (within one neighbourhood of a town, city, or borough).
- ii) networks which have at least one Community Savers affiliated group within their membership.
- iii) majority women-led: networks may have a range of groups within their membership but the committee of the network itself must have a majority of women leaders.
- iv) Constituted, independent organisations, with their own committee and bank account.

4. What will be required of us if we affiliate with Community Savers?

There are a range of opportunities that become available through affiliation with Community Savers including:

- learning exchanges with other affiliates or groups in new neighbourhoods
- quarterly network meetings for the Community Savers leadership
- working groups to develop ideas or proposals around particular issues as they arise (e.g. we had a working group to develop our affiliation process)
- external meetings, public speaking and university teaching opportunities focused on advocacy and attitude change or partnership development.
- an annual retreat for team building, strategic review, and collective planning

These activities are almost entirely optional: we recognise that community leaders are often firefighting and dealing with personal challenges of their own.

However, we do ask that affiliated groups do their best to send at least one representative to the quarterly network meetings, and there is a requirement to send a representative to at least 2 quarterly network meetings each year.

5. What's CLASS got to do with it?

Community Led Action and Savings Support (CLASS) is a registered charity. In 2019, Community Savers leaders decided they required a dedicated support agency to support their work locally and to support the deepening and broadening of their work across new areas. They worked with Sophie King (now Director) and Diana Mitlin (now a board member) to establish a charity that could perform a similar role to support agencies in other SDI movements, such as SDI Kenya and the Community Organisation Resource Centre (CORC) in South Africa.

CLASS performs five key roles in line with support functions in other SDI alliances:

- i) Raising money
- ii) "Making friends" with professionals: building relationships that open constructive partnerships for communities; helping facilitate partnerships once they have developed; acting as translator between formal/professional and informal/community ways of working and understanding the world.
- iii) Documenting and communicating learning and achievements: creating space for groups to learn from what they are doing and build on it; capturing learning by documenting and writing about it; supporting groups to write and speak about it; attracting new audiences; creating platforms for amplifying community voice and demonstrating value of community-led and co-productive approaches.
- iv) Technical assistance: listening to community needs and then providing technical assistance or identifying and bringing in technical assistance.
- v) Strategic facilitation: working with groups and the network leadership to "prepare the ground for the challenges to come" – creating time for leaders to lift their heads up from firefighting and think about how best to organise going forwards and the kinds of solutions they want to promote.

6. How does decision-making work?

Community Savers leaders come together to reflect and make strategic choices and decisions about the network in the following ways:

- Quarterly network meetings
- Reflections at our annual retreat
- A Leadership Group that can meet and make decisions in between network meetings where required.
- Working groups that may be established in response to issues that need thinking through.

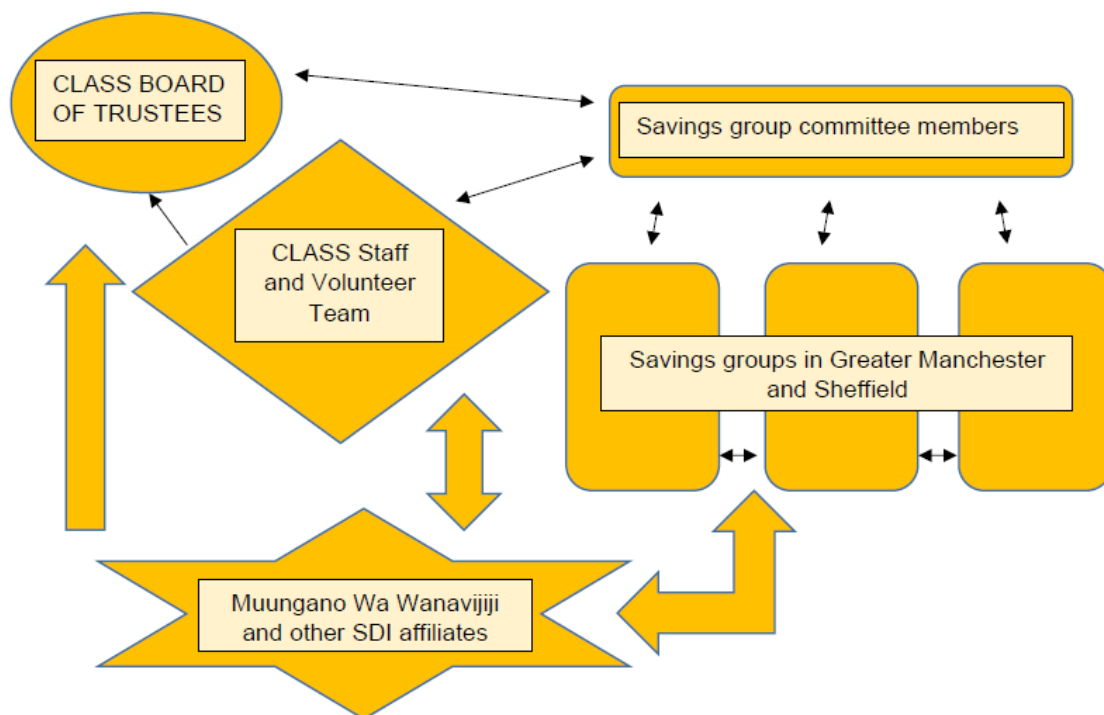
Where possible, decisions are made through discussion and consensus. If a consensus cannot be reached, decisions are put to majority vote (one vote per group).

CLASS exists to support a community-led and women-led process. It is subject to the legal requirements of charity governance and has a board of trustees to govern the organisation in line with Charity Commission and HMRC guidelines.

Community Savers nominate two leaders (from different groups) to represent the network leadership on the board of trustees every year. These representatives consult with and feedback to the leadership at quarterly network meetings.

There is full transparency over funds held by CLASS on behalf of Community Savers. An annual budget is presented to the Community Savers leadership at the beginning of each new financial year. New funding bids are developed in consultation with leaders and circulated for comments in advance of submission. We attempt to ensure a 50/50 budgetary balance between CLASS costs and Community Savers costs. This is a guiding principle, and the reality is that the balance necessarily shifts over time. We hope to move towards a 70/30 split between funds for CLASS and funds for Community Savers projects and activities over time as the network grows.

How we work together



7. What next?

If you would like to explore the possibility of affiliation with Community Savers, please email contactus@class-uk.com to request a learning exchange visit from some of our leaders. We can also arrange for you to come and visit us at one of our venues if you prefer that as a first step.