

# Reinvigorating Town Twinning Associations – BGA Guide v2

**How town twinning associations can renew their  
organisations, expand their activities, and strengthen  
twinning links.**



**British-German  
Association**

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## **Introduction**

Founded in 1951, the British-German Association (BGA) is a charity that promotes mutual understanding and friendship between the UK and Germany. To this end, the BGA supports the development of people-to-people links between the UK and Germany, as well as closer contact between the UK and Germany at Governmental, Parliamentary, regional and local authority level.

Town twinning associations (TTAs) play an important role in maintaining twinning links and in the promotion of people-to-people links and mutual understanding. However, TTAs currently face a number of common challenges. Membership numbers of many TTAs are dwindling, and some TTAs are struggling to recruit new members and rejuvenate their membership. A shortage of committee/active members within TTAs is also commonplace. In recent years many local authorities have reduced or withdrawn financial and organisational support to TTAs, including their involvement in twinning activities. Accordingly, it can be a challenge for TTAs to maintain and fund their operations.

Given the significant challenges faced by TTAs, the BGA has prepared this guide to provide UK-based TTAs with ideas on how to reinvigorate their operations and activities, and contribute to a strengthening of twinning links. The ideas in this guide are based on online research and interviews with TTAs (see annex for a list of TTAs that were interviewed). The guide is a menu, not a blueprint, as certain best practices may suit some TTAs but not others.

The guide is split into themed sections:

- TTA Activities
- Linking Organisations, Groups & Schools in Twin Towns
- Involving & Recruiting Young People
- Outreach
- Recruiting Committee Members & Volunteers
- Funding & Fundraising
- Involving & Obtaining Support from the Local Council
- Promoting Diversity, Gender Equality & Inclusivity
- Setting up a TTA

Please note, the terms „town twinning”, “twinning arrangement”, “twinning link” and “twinning” are used throughout this guide. These terms are used to refer to any official partnerships between towns, cities, counties, administrative districts and/or boroughs. Similarly, the term “twin town” is used throughout the guide to refer to twin towns, cities, counties, administrative districts, boroughs etc.

## Summary of Best Practices

A summary of the best practices provided in each section is listed below:

- **Activities that can be organised by TTAs:**
  - **Activities involving the twin town:** Visits to and from twin town; regular Zoom exchanges and events; online tandems; joint projects with the twin town; and photo competitions.
  - **Activities not involving the twin town:** Quiz evenings; music events; *Stammtische*; German conversation groups; walks; lunches or dinners with German food; lectures on topics related to Germany; German wine tasting; Christmas parties; German movie screenings; meet and greet events / open evenings; fundraising events; and joint events with similar organisations.
- **Linking Organisations, Groups & Schools in Twin Towns:** Links can be established between schools, football teams, swimming clubs, tennis clubs, youth groups, musical groups, Rotaract and Rotary clubs, fire services etc.
- **Involving & Recruiting Young People:** Offering free memberships to young people; offering discounted family memberships; building a relationship with local schools and involving schools in twinning activities; organising activities that appeal to younger people; organising joint events with a local university; supporting the establishment of links between youth groups in the twin towns; having a stand at a university; involving young people in the TTA's outreach activities; and establishing a youth branch of the TTA.
- **Outreach:** Maintaining an online presence (e.g. via a website, a dedicated page on the council website, or a Facebook page or group); ensuring visible contact details; securing newspaper & magazine articles about the TTA; hanging up posters in visible locations; appointing a dedicated Communications Lead; using personal connections; having a stand/stall promoting the TTA; reaching out to similar/relevant groups; organising meet and greet events / open evenings; and organising public and joint events.
- **Recruiting Committee Members & Volunteers:** Having one-on-one meetings with existing members to encourage them to join the committee; actively encouraging new members to join the committee from the outset; making members feel welcome, involved and valued; appointing a volunteer coordinator; and recruiting students for internships and young people as volunteers.
- **Funding and Fundraising:** Having a small annual membership fee; organising fundraising events; funding from local businesses; launching a crowdfunding campaign; encouraging donations and legacy gifts from existing members; applying for lottery funding; and requesting funding from the council.
- **Involving & Obtaining Support from the Local Council:**
  - **Involving the council in town twinning:** Involving council representatives in the TTA committee; giving the Leader of the Council or (Lord) Mayor a ceremonial role; inviting the Leader of the Council, (Lord) Mayor and councillors to major twinning events and receptions; proposing yearly twinning update meetings with the council; encouraging the Leader of the Council and councillors to participate in civic visits; and encouraging officer exchanges.
  - **Areas in which councils could provide support to TTAs:** Funding/financial support, free of charge use of council premises for twinning events, TTA meetings and fundraising events, hosting receptions for visitors from the twin town; and employing a twinning/international officer.

- **Promoting Diversity, Gender Equality & Inclusivity:** Keeping membership and event costs to a minimum to ensure everyone can get involved; subsidising costs for those who may otherwise not be able to participate in a trip; organising activities that will appeal to all genders; involving all genders when organising a sports competition; and when building relationships and collaborating with schools, actively encouraging disadvantaged schools to get involved.
- **Setting up a TTA:**
  - **Factors to consider before setting up a TTA:** checking whether a twinning link to a German town already exists; checking whether a British TTA already exists to support that twinning link; contacting the council to see if any twinning activities take place at council level and how residents can get involved; and checking if there is a neighbouring town with a TTA in which you could get involved.
  - **Suggestions for setting up a TTA:** reaching out to the local council to understand the interest of the council and potential support from the council, and recruiting further volunteers.
  - **If your town does not have an existing twinning arrangement with a German town:** contact local council to identify whether they would support the establishment of a twinning arrangement to a German town and find a suitable partner town in Germany.

## Best Practices

### 1. TTA Activities

In order to retain existing members and also attract new members, it is recommended TTAs organise a range of activities that will appeal to residents. For ideas of activities that may appeal to younger people, see section 3. *Involving & Recruiting Young People*.

#### **1.1. Activities Involving the Twin Town**

A range of activities can be organised and take place together with the twin town, in order to foster regular contact between residents of twin towns. Best practices include:

- **Visits to and from twin town:** This is the most common form of twinning activity. Once a year or every two years, the British town visits the German twin town or receives visitors from the German twin town. Guests are mostly hosted in the homes of members of the receiving TTA. Activities and sight-seeing trips are organised by the receiving TTA. Advice provided by TTAs includes:
  - Consider three-day visits over a bank holiday weekend so that visitors/hosts do not need to take annual leave to participate.
  - Plan for visits to take place at the same time as major events, such as carnivals and town festivals – this can make a visit extra special. Enquire whether it is possible for visitors to get actively involved in the event; for example, in the carnival parade.
  - Encourage stays with host families: when organising a trip to or from the twin town, encourage those travelling to stay with host families, as this allows for closer relationships to be developed between residents of the two towns.
  - Give members the opportunity to get to know the person they will be hosting or staying with in a video call in the weeks or months before the visit. You could give those who are unsure about hosting the opportunity to virtually meet the person they could be hosting before they actually have to commit to hosting.
  - Avoid the formation of cliques/groups: some members will have participated in twin town visits for many years and will have developed close friendships with other TTA members and residents of the twin town. You should encourage everyone participating in twin town visits to be particularly welcoming to first time participants.
- **Regular Zoom exchanges and events:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, TTAs had to cancel scheduled trips to and from the twin town. In order to maintain contact with the twin town during this period, some TTAs started interacting regularly with their friends and contacts in the twin town on Zoom and similar platforms. Such Zoom exchanges and events could be continued in the long-term, as they allow for more regular exchanges between twin towns and for stronger people-to-people links to be developed. Examples of themes for such Zoom exchanges and events include quizzes, *Kaffee und Kuchen* (coffee and cake), wine and cheese tasting, book club etc. It is recommended you set an activity, theme or topic in advance of the meeting.
- **Tandems:** You could partner members of your TTA with members of the German TTA and other contacts in the German twin town so that the tandem partners can practise and improve their language skills. Tandem partners can meet regularly in video calls at mutually convenient times, during which they use both German and English equally (or just one of the languages if preferred).

- **Joint projects with twin town:** When interacting with the TTA in the twin town, you could identify common interests and explore any joint projects that could be pursued together by the TTAs.
- **Photo competition:** Together with the German TTA, you could organise an online photo competition. A judging panel with representatives from both towns can then judge entries and award prizes to the best entries.

## 1.2. Activities Not Involving the Twin Town

To make membership of the TTA attractive, in addition to the aforementioned events and activities with the twin town, you could organise various social events throughout the year for members. Best practices include:

- Quiz evenings
- Music events
- *Stammtische* (informal social evenings held on a regular basis, e.g. in a pub)
- German conversation groups
- Walks
- Lunches or dinners with German food
- Lectures on topics related to Germany
- German wine tasting
- Christmas parties
- German movie screenings
- Meet and greet events / open evenings (see section 4.2 *Further Outreach Activities*)
- Fundraising events: events could also be organised with the specific purpose of raising funds for the TTA; see section 6. *Funding & Fundraising*.
- Joint events with similar organisations (see section 4.2. *Further Outreach Activities*)

## 2. Linking Organisations, Groups & Schools in Twin Towns

By involving several stakeholders in the twinning link and activities, you can contribute to an overall strengthening of the twinning arrangement. This also reduces the burden on TTAs and helps ensure that the twinning arrangement is not just dependent on a single TTA but is instead maintained by multiple stakeholders in the twin towns. Once links between organisations and groups have been established, you could attempt to recruit new members from the British organisation or group. Best practices include:

- **Supporting establishment of links between organisations and groups:** Some TTAs play an important connecting function by supporting the establishment of links between organisations and groups in the British and German twin towns. Examples of organisations and groups that can be partnered include football teams, swimming clubs, tennis clubs, youth groups (e.g. scouts and brownies), musical groups (e.g. orchestras, brass bands and choral societies), Rotaract and Rotary clubs, fire services etc. It should be explained to the prospective partner organisations from the beginning that they will be responsible for maintaining the link with the German partner organisation and for organising exchanges. TTAs can of course provide support when needed.
- **Supporting establishment of school partnerships:** You could support the establishment of partnerships between schools in the twin towns, to enable virtual exchanges ([see here](#) for further information) or in-person exchanges ([see here](#) for further information) between the partner schools.

Safeguarding measures need to be considered when organising international exchange visits involving young people with a homestay element. [Click here](#) to view a guidance paper by the Association of School and College Leaders on organising international exchange visits with a homestay element.

### **3. Involving & Recruiting Young People**

A challenge faced by many TTAs is an ageing membership and a struggle to involve and recruit younger members. Best practices for involving young people in twinning activities and recruiting young members include:

- **Free memberships for young people:** You could offer young people a free membership of the TTA. Whilst this may result in potential lost income for the TTA, it could encourage young people, who may not have otherwise joined, to join the TTA. Free membership could, for example, be offered to under 25s or to those in full-time education.
- **Discounted family memberships:** Families could be offered a membership at a rate that is not much higher than an individual membership. This could encourage members to get their families and children involved in twinning activities.
- **Building a relationship with local schools:** You could build relationships with teachers in local schools that may have an interest in town twinning activities, such as the Head of German or Modern Foreign Languages, the Head of PE or a deputy head teacher. Once a relationship has been built with the school, you can involve schools in a range of twinning activities. Best practices include:
  - Supporting the establishment of school partnerships (see section 2. *Linking Organisations, Groups & Schools in Twin Towns* above)
  - Organising competitions and projects on town twinning or the German language for pupils in local schools, with the winner(s) receiving a prize. The winner(s) could be determined by either the school or TTA committee members, and the prize could, for example, be awarded by the Lord Mayor or a councillor.
  - Putting together teaching packs on town twinning. If you prepare teaching packs for teachers at local schools, teachers will easily be able to deliver lessons on town twinning and raise young people's awareness of local twinning activities. It is recommended to discuss the teaching packs with the teachers before preparing them, so that the packs meet the teachers' and curriculum requirements.
  - Holding talks on twinning in local schools: You could ask local schools for the opportunity to hold a talk on town twinning, for example, during a German class or a school assembly. This further helps raise awareness of town twinning among young people.
  - Making schools aware of twinning opportunities for young people, including any events and activities in their own or in the twin town. Schools could, for example, be invited to field a team for any twinning sports competitions taking place. You could highlight any financial support that may be available to young people participating in these opportunities.
- **Organising activities that appeal to younger people:** Activities could be organised as part of a visit from the twin town, which would enable young people from the twin towns to interact with one another and develop friendships. You could also consider organising these activities just for young people, to foster the development of friendships amongst young members and therefore motivate them to join or stay involved in the TTA. Parents



accompanying their children to such activities could potentially be recruited to the TTA. Examples of activities that could be organised include:

- Twinning superstars: You could organise a sports competition in which young people from the twin towns compete against each other in a variety of sports. If it is not possible to bring young people from both twin towns together, the competition could be held separately in each twin town, with an overall leadership board for participants from both twin towns.
- Football tournaments: You could organise, or together with local teams support the organisation of, football tournaments for teams from both twin towns. Schools and local football teams can be contacted to field a team for the tournament.
- Youth dialogues: Young people from the twin towns could be brought together (in person or virtually) to discuss topics that affect them, such as climate change. The young people from the twin towns could develop common statements and proposals to be submitted to the councils of both towns.
- Go-karting day.
- Gigs involving bands from both twin towns.
- Camping weekend with activities and games: During a visit from the twin town, you could organise a camping weekend, to which families not normally involved in town twinning could also be invited. This should involve the organisation of games and activities that would appeal to families and children.
- **Organising joint events with a local university:** You could organise events together with the German department or another relevant department at a local university. The university would be able to invite students to attend, which would help raise the TTA's profile amongst local students.
- **Supporting the establishment of links between youth groups in the twin towns,** e.g. scouts and brownies (see section 2. *Linking Organisations, Groups & Schools in Twin Towns*).
- **Having a stand at a university:** You could set up a stand at a university to actively recruit student members.
- **Involving young people in outreach activities:** When carrying out outreach activities, e.g. by having a stand to promote the TTA or meet & greet events, you could involve young people in the outreach activity, in order to attract further young people to the TTA. The young people involved in outreach activities could, for example, be family members of existing members.
- **Establish a youth branch of the TTA:** Once a few young members have been recruited, you could create a youth branch of the TTA for young members. Events and activities could specifically be organised for the youth branch. Some of the older members of the youth branch could be given certain responsibilities within the TTA. Young members could also be encouraged to recruit further young members.

Safeguarding measures need to be considered when organising international exchange visits with a homestay element. [Click here](#) to view a guidance paper by the Association of School and College Leaders on organising international exchange visits with a homestay element.

## **4. Outreach**

### **4.1. Communications**

Communication activities are important for recruiting new members as well as informing residents of town twinning activities. Best practices in this area include:

- **Maintaining an online presence:** Without an online presence, it can be difficult for local residents to find out about the TTA or their twin town. Regardless of which form of online presence is used, efforts should be made to ensure your TTA's contact details are very visible, so that potential members can easily get in touch with the TTA. Options for an online presence include:
  - **Setting up a website:** By having a website, you are able to publish information about the town twinning arrangement, activities organised by the TTA and how to join the TTA. However, it is only recommended to set up a website for the TTA if you have a member/volunteer who is able to regularly update the page. You can create a website relatively easily using a website builder and customizable templates; these in some cases do not require technical skills. Examples of website builders include [GoDaddy](#), [123-reg](#), [Wix](#) etc. (Please note, we have only included these links to provide examples of website builders that could be used; we don't take responsibility for the content of these external sites).
  - **Shared website:** If you are not able to set up your own website, you could explore the option of setting up a joint website with your twin town's TTA (German TTAs in many cases have a website). Relevant information and updates to be uploaded to the website could be sent to the webmaster of the German TTA.
  - **Dedicated page on council website:** You could request that the local council include a page on its website to promote the town twinning arrangement and the TTA. Key information to include on the page includes the TTA's contact details and, if applicable, a link to the TTA's website or social media page.
  - **Facebook page or group:** A Facebook page or group is easier to set up and maintain than a website. By having a Facebook page or group, you can enhance your TTA's visibility and keep members and interested residents updated on town twinning activities. While there are many different social networks available, you could initially focus on Facebook, given its status as the world's most popular social network (source: [statista](#)).
    - Facebook page: A short guide on how to create a Facebook page can be found by clicking [here](#). Aby Hucker (one of the BGA's Regional Representatives for Hertfordshire & Chair of Baldock Town Twinning Association) prepared tutorials on how to (1) [create a Facebook page](#); (2) [create posts and engage with other content on Facebook](#); and (3) [carry out admin tasks on Facebook](#). The advantage of a Facebook page over a Facebook group is that Facebook pages appear more professional.
    - Facebook group: You can find a short guide on how to create a Facebook group by clicking [here](#) or a video tutorial by clicking [here](#). The advantage of a Facebook group (over a Facebook page) is that they are easier to maintain, since any members of the group can post updates. This therefore means that several members of the group can more easily share the task of posting twinning updates. A Facebook group is recommended if your TTA does not have a committee member who is able to manage a Facebook page and keep it up to date. There are different privacy options for Facebook groups (see [here](#)). If you opt for a private group, only members of the group will see posts and updates, which may make it more difficult to reach new people.
- **Ensuring visible contact details:** You should ensure that the TTA's contact details are very visible, e.g. on the website, social media channels, flyers etc. Personal email addresses

should be avoided; instead, you could set-up email addresses that can be passed on to successors, e.g. NameOfTTA@gmail.com. If personal email addresses are used, interested residents may in future find and contact the email address of a former committee member who is no longer involved in the TTA.

- **Newspaper & magazine articles:** Some TTAs contact local newspapers and magazines to request an article on the TTA and town twinning links. You could also proactively draft articles / press releases and request these be published by newspapers and magazines. Key information to include is how residents can get involved in the TTA and details of town twinning activities.
- **Council magazine or newsletter:** Some local authorities provide a magazine or newsletter for residents. As above, you could contact the council to request an article on the TTA and town twinning links.
- **Posters:** You could hang up posters in visible locations or in a local newsagent to inform residents about the TTA or upcoming events.
- **Appointing a dedicated Communications Lead:** Communication activities are important but time intensive. You could therefore appoint a committee member who takes responsibility for this area of work.

#### 4.2. Further Outreach Activities

In addition to communications, there are further effective outreach activities that can help you recruit new members. Best practices in this area include:

- **Personal connections:** You could encourage existing members to recruit friends and family to the TTA.
- **Stand/stall promoting the TTA:** You could have a stand at community events, festivals or in busy areas of town to promote the TTA. Flyers can be handed out with information on the TTA and how to get involved.
- **Reaching out to similar/relevant groups:** You could reach out to other local groups to inform them about the TTA and its activities (e.g., by holding a presentation for their members). Examples of such groups include German societies and groups, *Stammtische*, U3A German groups, German language classes as well as organisations and clubs that have an existing link with the German twin town.
- **Meet and greet events / open evenings:** Free of charge meet and greet events / open evenings to give residents the opportunity to get to know your TTA and find out more about twinning activities. Such events could involve food, drinks, a presentation on the TTA as well as the opportunity for residents to speak to existing members. It is important to advertise meet and greet events / open evenings so that non-members are also aware that the event will be taking place.
- **Public events:** You could also organise events that are open to the public. Public events can help raise the TTA's profile and be used to recruit new members (for example, by holding a presentation about town twinning and the TTA at the beginning or at the end of the event). Again, it is important to advertise public events so that non-members are aware that the event will be taking place. You could organise public events as part of a town festival to generate further awareness of the TTA. For event ideas, see section 1. *TTA activities*.
- **Joint events:** Events could also be organised in collaboration with similar organisations, such as German conversation groups, German *Stammtische*, nearby TTAs or the German department at a local university. By organising events with other organisations, you can raise

the TTA's profile and potentially attract new members from those in attendance. For event ideas, see section 1. *TTA activities*.

## **5. Recruiting Committee Members & Volunteers**

A challenge faced by many TTAs is recruiting committee members, who take on an active role in the TTA to maintain the association's operations and activities. Best practices include:

- **One-on-one meetings:** You could meet individually with existing members of the TTA (e.g. for a coffee) and encourage them to become active members and join the committee. Highlight any benefits of being a committee/active member.
- **Actively encouraging new members:** (Potential) New members could be offered the opportunity to become active within the TTA from the outset. If any new members express an interest in becoming active, you could set up a one-on-one meeting as above.
- **Making members feel welcome, involved & valued:** It can be easier to encourage existing members to become more active and take on committee roles if they feel welcome, involved and valued. Members can be made to feel involved by actively asking them for ideas and input. Members can be made to feel valued by thanking them for their contributions and ideas.

For TTAs that still struggle to appoint committee members, alternative options include:

- **Appointing a volunteer coordinator:** Some members may want to contribute to the work of the TTA but may not want to take on the responsibility of having an official role in the committee. You could therefore appoint a volunteer coordinator, who coordinates these volunteers. When there are tasks, events or projects for which support is required, the volunteer coordinator reaches out to the volunteers (e.g., via a Whatsapp group or email) and delegates (or encourages volunteers to complete) tasks. Please note, this specific suggestion is not a best practice from a TTA, but rather a form of community organising, adapted to the purpose of TTAs.
- **Recruiting students for internships and young people as volunteers:** Some young people and students look for work experience and internships to enhance their CV. You could therefore offer student internships and recruit young people as voluntary workers in areas in which support is required, such as creating and managing a social media account, Public Relations, website designing and logo designing. In return, the young people and students can add the experience to their CV, develop their portfolio, receive a reference and, if applicable, limited benefits (e.g. travel or lunch expenses). This requires targeted outreach activities to recruit young people and students, such as posting an advert on a university website or hanging up posters in the relevant department of a university or college. Employment rights and pay for interns must be adhered to though - see [here](#) for further information.

## **6. Funding & Fundraising**

Some TTAs no longer receive funding from their local council. As a result, they have found alternative ways to fund their activities. Best practices include:

- **Small annual membership fee:** Many TTAs have adopted a small affordable membership fee. Some members may be able to / want to pay a higher membership fee; you could therefore offer the option for members to pay a voluntary higher membership fee (members who can afford to do so could then choose to contribute more to the TTA).

- **Fundraising events:** You could organise events with the specific purpose of raising funds. Fundraising events can be organised for TTA members and the public. If organising a public event, the event could be organised as part of a community or town festival to raise awareness for the event. Funds can be raised by charging an entrance or participation fee, asking participants for donations, or by selling items at the event. Best practices of fundraising events include:
  - Raffles, tombolas, quizzes and bingo nights, with prizes for the winners
  - Oktoberfest / German beer festival: you could organise a small Oktoberfest / German beer festival within your town and sell German beer at a profit
  - German Christmas market: you could organise a German Christmas market for a day, e.g., in the hall of the local council; German goods, bakery and mulled wine can then be sold at a profit
  - Fundraising dinner (can also be linked with a raffle)
  - German lunch or dinner
  - Parking services: one interviewed TTA uses the grounds of a local school as a car park on specific dates throughout the year; those using the car park make a donation and half the proceeds go to the TTA and the other half to the school
  - German movie evening: you could organise a German film evening together with your local cinema, with profits split between the cinema and the TTA
  - Coffee morning or afternoon tea
  - Car boot sale: you could organise a car boot sale, using the grounds of a local school, community building or car park
  - BBQ
  - Murder mystery evening
- **Funding from local businesses:** Some town twinning associations benefit from financial support from local businesses. In return, you could offer to include the logos of the businesses on the TTA's website and promotional materials. The local businesses could also be invited to civic receptions (with the opportunity to hold a short speech). You can reach out to local businesses by sending them an email or letter. Examples of the different ways businesses can provide support are:
  - Donations
  - Sponsorship of the TTA, or of specific twinning events or receptions
  - Becoming a corporate member of the TTA (whereby the business pays an annual corporate membership fee)
  - Donating gifts for raffles, tombolas etc.
- **Launching a crowdfunding campaign:** You could obtain donations via crowdfunding. Examples of crowdfunding websites you could use include [GoFundMe](#) and [JustGiving](#) (please note, we have only included these links as examples of crowdfunding websites that you can use if you wish; we don't take responsibility for the content of these external sites). It is recommended to clearly state what the donations will be used for, as this can encourage people to donate.
- **Donations:** Members could be encouraged on the website, in newsletters or in emails to make donations to the TTA.
- **Legacy gifts:** You could inform members on how they can leave small legacies to the association.

- **Applying for Lottery funding:** e.g., the [National Lottery Community Fund](#) and community lotteries. Funding is normally provided for concrete projects, so a suitable project that fulfils any criteria would need to be outlined when making an application.
- **Requesting funding from council:** See section 7.2. *Areas in which Councils could Support TTAs* below.

## **7. Involving & Obtaining Support from the Local Council**

Some councils have reduced or ended their involvement in twinning activities. The involvement of local councils in town twinning can, however, help strengthen links to the twin town. You could therefore encourage and provide opportunities for the council to (further) participate in twinning activities. Local councils in some cases provide invaluable support to TTAs. In cases where the local council does not provide any support, you could lobby your local council for support.

### **7.1. Involving the Council in Town Twinning**

Councils that are already involved in town twinning may be more receptive to providing support to TTAs. TTAs could therefore begin by attempting to involve councils in town twinning. Best practices of involving the council in town twinning include:

- **Involving council representatives in the TTA committee:**
  - Current councillors and (Lord) Mayor: You could either reach out to councillors and the (Lord) Mayor directly to recruit them to the TTA committee, or you could suggest that the council appoints councillors to the TTA committee. By involving councillors and Mayors in the TTA committee, a direct link can be maintained between the council and the TTA, and the councillors or Mayors can act as a liaison between the TTA and council.
  - Officers: You could attempt to recruit officers who work in relevant departments to the TTA. Like councillors, officers may also have good connections within the council, which could benefit the TTA.
  - Former councillors and (Lord) Mayors: Former councillors and (Lord) Mayors will likely still have connections in the council, which could be useful to TTAs, particularly when requesting support from the council.
- **Giving the Leader of the Council or (Lord) Mayor a ceremonial role:** The Leader of the Council or (Lord) Mayor could be given a ceremonial position within the TTA, e.g. as a President or Patron. This also helps establish a link between the TTA and the council. As a President or Patron, the Leader of the Council or (Lord) Mayor attends important functions and events, such as a reception for visitors from the twin town.
- **Inviting the Leader of the Council, (Lord) Mayor and councillors to major twinning events and receptions**
- **Proposing yearly twinning update meetings:** You could request that a TTA representative attends council meetings to provide updates on the twinning arrangement.
- **Encouraging the Leader of the Council and councillors to participate in civic visits:** You could encourage the Leader of the Council, cabinet members and councillors to visit the twin town and build a relationship with politicians in the twin town. Civic trips could involve the Leader of the Council instead of the Lord Mayor, as Lord Mayors are in most cases only in office for one year, which makes it difficult for longer-term relationships to be built between politicians of the twin towns. It is recommended that civic visits have a specific purpose or theme, which would be of interest to the council, e.g. an exchange of best practices in a particular area or boosting business links between the twin towns.



- **Encouraging officer exchanges:** This entails sending officers to your twin town's local authority and receiving officers from the twin town. You could highlight the benefits of such officer exchanges, such as the sharing of skills, knowledge and best practices.

## **7.2. Areas in which Councils could Support TTAs**

You could lobby your local council to provide support to the TTA by:

- **Providing funding/financial support.** There are different ways in which councils can support TTAs financially, including:
  - Yearly grant from council
  - Providing specific funding for trips, major events and/or projects
  - Providing funding with specific criteria: some councils provide funding to TTAs, but the funds have to be used for specific purposes, such as providing opportunities for young people or disadvantaged groups to visit the twin town
  - Funding per person: Some councils and TTAs have an agreement that the TTA receives a certain amount of funding per person that participates in a visit to or from the twin town
- **Providing free of charge use of council premises for twinning events, TTA meetings or fundraising events**
- **Hosting a reception for visitors from the twin town:** When politicians and residents of the twin town visit, you could request that the council holds a reception to welcome the guests. Such a reception could include a meal and/or drinks in a reception room of the council as well as a speech by a high-ranking politician.
- **Employing a twinning/international officer:** Twinning officers can manage or support the organisation, promotion and delivery of twinning activities. Moreover, twinning officers can coordinate the different TTAs in the area and support their activities.

## **8. Promoting Diversity, Gender Equality & Inclusivity**

Various actions can be considered to promote diversity, gender equality and inclusivity in twinning activities:

- Keeping membership and event costs to a minimum to ensure everyone can get involved; discounts or free memberships could be offered to individuals who may struggle to otherwise participate in twinning activities
- Subsidising costs for those who may otherwise not be able to participate in a trip to a twin town (if financially feasible)
- Organising activities that will appeal to all genders
- Involving all genders when organising a sports competition, e.g. both girls and boys teams when organising a football tournament
- When building relationships and collaborating with schools, encouraging disadvantaged schools to get involved as well

## **9. Setting up a TTA**

This guide is primarily focussed on reinvigorating existing TTAs. However, for scenarios in which a TTA does not exist in your town, we have included advice on aspects to consider when setting up a new TTA.

Before setting up a new TTA, you should check whether your town already has a twinning arrangement with a German town and whether a British TTA already exists to support that twinning

arrangement. A list of British-German twinning arrangements and a list of UK-based TTAs that support links to Germany can be found by [clicking here](#).

If your town already has a twinning link with Germany and a TTA to support that link, you can get involved in twinning activities by joining the TTA. You can use this guide for ideas on how to reinvigorate the TTA's activities and contribute to a strengthening of twinning links.

If a twinning link to a German town exists, but there is not a TTA to support the twinning link, you could contact the council to see if any twinning activities still take place at council level and offer your support. You could also see if there is a neighbouring town with a TTA, in which you could get involved. Alternatively, an entirely new TTA could be set up. If you would like to set up a new TTA, try to reach out to the local council to understand whether the council would be interested in strengthening its links to the twin town and whether the council would be able to provide any support to a new TTA. For information on how to involve the council and how the council could support the TTA, see section 7. *Involving & Obtaining support from the Local Council*. Setting up a TTA is a long and complex process, so you should also try to recruit further people at an early stage who can support you. For ideas on how to recruit others, see section 4. *Outreach*.

If a twinning link to a German town does not yet exist, a new twinning arrangement could be established. If you would like the link to the German town/city to be a formal twinning arrangement, you would have to get the support of the local council, as both your local council and the German local council would have to sign a formal twinning charter / memorandum of understanding to formalise the partnership. Once you have obtained the support of the local council, you would need to find a suitable partner town/city in Germany. You can find a list of German towns and cities looking for a twin by [clicking here](#). It is important to find a town or city that is comparable to your own town or city, as several twinning arrangements have failed due to a lack of commonalities between the two towns/cities. Ideally, there would be similarities in the following areas: key economic sectors, population size and challenges faced by the towns.



## **Conclusion**

We hope that TTAs find the best practices and ideas included in this guide useful. If you are aware of any further best practices that could improve the guide, please get in touch with us. We aim to keep the guide up-to-date and to adapt it to the needs of TTAs.

In addition to this guide, the BGA also supports twinning and TTAs via its network of regional representatives. Our regional representatives support twinning and TTAs in their respective regions/counties – [click here](#) for further information and to find out if your region/county has a regional representative. If a regional representative has not yet been appointed to your county/region and you would be interested in supporting twinning and TTAs in your county/region, please get in touch with us using [this contact form](#).

We realise that being involved in town twinning involves a significant degree of time and commitment, so we are grateful to everyone who is active in TTAs. Twinning activities provide residents with new opportunities and play an important role in strengthening people-to-people links, mutual understanding and friendships between the UK and Germany.

## **Annex - Interviewed TTAs**

Stakeholders from the following TTAs kindly contributed best practices to this guide:

Aberystwyth Kronberg Twinning (<https://aberystwyth-kronberg-twinning.co.uk>); Ashford Twinning Association (<https://ashfordtowntowns.uk>); Baldock Town Twinning Association ([www.baldocktowntwinning.com](http://www.baldocktowntwinning.com)); Barnsley Schwäbisch Gmünd Twin Town Society (<http://www.bsgtts.org>); Basildon Borough Twinning Association (<https://basildontwinning.wordpress.com>); Bingham Twinning Association (<https://binghamtwinning.com>); Bognor Regis Twinning Association (<https://www.bognortwinning.co.uk/>); Bristol-Hannover Council (<https://bristolhannovercouncil.org.uk>); Cheltenham Twinning Association (<https://cheltenhamtwinning.uk/>); Chippenham Twinning Association (<https://www.chippenham-twinning.org.uk>); Coventry Association for International Friendship ([www.caif.co.uk](http://www.caif.co.uk)); Crawley Town Twinning Association (<https://www.dorsten-crawley.com>); Darlington Town Twinning & International Association (<https://www.darlingtontowntwinning.co.uk>); Felixstowe Wesel Association (<http://felixwesel.onesuffolk.net/>); Friends of Alzey (<http://www.friendsofalzey.com>); Guildford Twinning Association (<https://guildfordtwinning.uk>); Lossiemouth-Hersbruck Twin Town Association; Odenwald Association (<https://falkirktwinning.org/odenwald/>); Richmond in Europe Association (<https://richmondineurope.com>); Whitstable Twinning Association (<https://www.whitstabletwinning.co.uk>); and York–Münster Twinning Association (<https://york-muenster.weebly.com>)

Disclaimer: the best practices included in this guide were contributed by different TTAs based in the UK. Some best practices included in this guide may not necessarily reflect the position of each of the aforementioned TTAs, as each association contributed a different set of best practices. The guide does not reflect all the ideas contributed by TTAs. Given the BGA's status as a charity, the guide does not include suggestions that could be politically divisive.