Section 6 - *Working Together Effectively*

Introduction

This section looks at different aspects of supporting people to work together and be effective in what they choose to do. It starts with some suggestions for setting out the aims of a groups and ways of working together, and the case studies show some of the delights and downsides of trying to work well together. Different techniques for helping groups to assess their own strengths and weaknesses offer practical ways to support groups to do this important work. There are two articles with quite different approaches to running meetings, one more formally than the other.

Communication is always an issue when working with groups of people and two particular aspects are highlighted in the articles of making information accessible to disabled people, and working with bilingual communities and events.

The last three articles specifically explore different approaches to working with young people within communities and in groups.

Within the 2001 skills manual, there are relevant articles within the section on equality which support community development work with different communities of interest and identity. The section on effective group working is still as relevant today as the basis of good group work doesn't tend to change too much over time, we just get better at finding more creative ways to engage with people.

Within the FCDL resource pack on Involving People you will find handouts, exercises and guidance notes on understanding the different levels that people engage within groups, the formal and informal roles they take, the different kinds of groups that exist and covers some ways of maintaining peoples interest and involvement.

Within the Groups Work Skills resource pack you will find handouts, exercises and guidance notes on why people join groups, group dynamics, problems in groups, setting aims and priorities, different ways of organising, issues of inclusion and exclusion within groups, and the roles that community development workers can take in groups and the impact this has.

Within the taster pack "Training Techniques for Environmental Action" there are details of many of the techniques referred to in this section.

Contents - *Working Together Effectively*

SETTING THE AIMS AND PURPOSE OF A GROUP

Introduction

It is important for a group to have clear goals (your aims) which everyone knows and agrees with. You need to have worked out the practical steps that need to be taken for you to achieve them (your objectives). It is helpful to be realistic, even if your overall aims are world-changing.

There are basically two approaches to starting to agree the aims of the group:

- You can start with agreeing what the problems are and then explore different solutions
- Or you can think ahead to what people want to see in 'x' years time and then look at the steps needed to make this happen

Practical Exercises

Here are some exercises that you can do as a group to help you agree a shared vision and aims for your group as the basis for setting your priorities and plans of actions.

1. Agree/ Disagree game

Ask everyone in the group to write down on some paper what they think the aims of the group are, or should be – one aim for each piece of paper. Pass a hat round to put the paper in, and then group together similar aims. This can be done on a table, or by blu-tacking the papers to a wall.

Invite everyone to have a look at all the writing. After everyone has had a chance to do this, any aims that anyone disagree with must be turned over and "I disagree" written on the back. All the untouched pieces of paper are the aims that everyone agrees with!
Discussion time can now be spent going through all the "I disagree" pieces of paper. They might only need clarification, or prompt a big debate, but the group time can be spent in a more focused way.

All the aims agreed on need to be written up for a final view by the whole group. It can be helpful to date the aims, and also decide when you are going to review them.

2. Mapping your community

Start with a large scale map of your area – you can draw a rough map on a flipchart with landmarks so people can recognise where things are, or get one from the local planning department of the council. Ask everyone to draw on the current problems they would like to see resolved. Using another copy of the same map, ask people to draw what they would like to see in 'x' years time.

3. Interview each other

People interview each other and note down the other person's concerns. They then feed these back to the whole group. Common concerns can be grouped together and a direction for the group may start to emerge. Make sure all concerns are addressed, even they are not possible for this particular group to take on right now.

4. Prioritising charts

There are many variations on this basic exercise, which provides a visual presentation of how people see the priorities of the group. As above, ask everyone to write down their aims, group them together, and then as a group decide whether each aim is something the group should be doing now, soon or later.

You could draw a grid on a flipchart (or back of part used rolls of wallpaper) with spaces for now, soon, later.

Or you could draw three concentric circles, with now in the centre, followed by soon, and later on the outside.

Approaching the group's aims in this way allows everyone's ideas and desires to come out, while keeping grounded with what is achievable, by when. "Creating a regional network" may be an aim that is too much to consider in the early days of a group, but placing it under "soon" or "later" means it won't be lost and people can see the bigger picture they are working towards.

The group might want to define "soon" and "later" as actual periods of time or specific dates.

5. Checking out the vision and need

Once the group has agreed on what it wants to achieve and has set out its aim(s), you will have to decide the best ways to achieve this aim. Before you rush into planning lots of activities the group needs to check out with the wider community:

- If the need is really there?
- Is anyone else trying to tackle the same need?
- Is the strategy the group has chosen likely to be the best one to achieve their aim?

It may be that the perceived need is actually not as great as the group initially thought, or that the actual need is different than they first thought. It could be that the problem has already been recognised by other organisations or agencies. Maybe another group has already started and not told anyone about their plans and so joining them would make sense.

If you are thinking of registering as a charity, the Charity Commission is reluctant to register new groups if there is already a similar one working in the same area. You can have charitable aims without necessarily being registered as a charity.

6. How to meet your aims – writing objectives

Outcome are the practical steps you need to take to meet your aims. If an example aim is 'To improve the lives of refugees and asylum seekers from …name of country of origin…'

You could come up with objectives like these to help you meet that aim:
'The group will support refugees and asylum seekers to access information about services they are entitled to'
'The group will promote the needs of refugees and asylum seekers'
'The group will find out the specific needs of its community'

Good words to help write aims and objectives are to explore, to improve, to help, to reinforce, to recognise, to understand, to know, to challenge, to develop, to inform, to discuss, to create, to experience, to clarify, to describe, to evaluate.

7. Writing an action plan

With all these exercises, you will need to go on to work out specific tasks, who is going to do them, and by when. You can also identify support and resources that will be needed along the way, and write down when you are going to review your aims – especially if the make-up of the group has changed with new people joining, or members leaving. In doing so you will have created a basic action plan for the group.

Task	Who is doing it	By when	Resources needed	Support needed
Write constitution	Mustafa, Samir, Elena	Next group meeting	Model constitution	Community Development Worker

Don't forget that you can always "Stop!" and reconsider if the work you are doing as a group changes along the way.

8 . Reflective questions

You can use these questions to prompt discussions and to get group members to really focus on putting their aims into actions:

- What do you need to do to meet your aims?

- How much are you going to stick to your aims and objectives once your work begins?

- Where would you be prepared to compromise, where wouldn't you?

- Do you have shared aims within the group? – be clear about what people want out of the group. Don't make assumptions.

- Are you united against something, or for something?

- Is the need really there – how do you know?

- Are there any other groups already trying to meet the same needs?

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A GROUP'S EQUALITY STATEMENT

Introduction

A statement about the group's approach to equality issues is worth having. Just having the discussion will bring out levels of understanding within the group, and provide clarity for all members on the group's principles. Increasingly, funding bodies require proof that groups they fund work in a positive way and don't exclude certain people or limit access to services the group provides.

Some advice

- Don't just copy someone else's statement! Use them to get some ideas of what you could include.
- Use your own words and be clear.
- Include practical examples. For example, how you would challenge unacceptable behaviour.
- Make sure everyone in the group contributes and understands what is meant in the statement.
- You may find it helpful to look at the principles underpinning community work when you come to have a discussion in your group about writing an equality statement. These include:
  » Promoting cooperation and working and learning together
  » Encouraging people's ability to do things, for themselves
  » Ensuring the sharing and development of knowledge
  » Challenging inequalities, promoting social justice, changing the balance of power and power structures

An example

This is an extract from a statement for a social centre:

"This social centre was founded through a spirit of co-operation, solidarity and mutual aid. Please show respect towards other users of the building and the space we've created.

One of the purposes of this Centre is to provide a space for debate and to promote the exchange of views on a wide range of issues, topics and concerns. Whilst you may not always agree with others opinions on all issues, please respect the rights of individuals to hold and express their point of view. However, this centre is open to all on the basis of equality for all. If you do not believe in equality regardless of age, sex, race, etc. then you are not welcome here, if you voice these opinions then you will be excluded."

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WORKING WITHOUT RULES

Introduction

If the group is running without any **written** rules, it is likely that there will be some **unwritten** rules. These could come from a set of beliefs or a way of doing things that is accepted as normal practice by the group. If these unwritten rules are not known or understood by all members of the group you are going to run into problems.

> 'Hulme Refugee Support' was founded and run by a group of refugees and asylum seekers living in Hulme. The group got on very well at first and for two years managed without any written aims or rules at all. Then, as new people became involved, some disagreements began to arise. Some of the members wanted the group to start running advice sessions. Other members felt equally strongly that the group should focus on running sports activities. There was no recognisable way to call a meeting. Both groups of members claimed that they were 'Hulme Refugee Support', that the room they used in the community centre was booked for them, and that the money in the bank belonged to them and not to the other group. When the community centre management committee tried to find out which group was renting the hall, it got two answers, and no rent.
>
> *From: Organising in Voluntary and Community Groups: Competence Pack (1993)*

Neither a group agreement nor a constitution will prevent problems like this arising, but they can help sort things out when disputes do arise.

A group agreement

A simple way for everyone in the group to have a clear picture of how the group works is to create a "group agreement". This is like a set of rules, except that the process of writing the agreement involves all members of the group, and no single person alone enforces what is agreed, as everyone is responsible.

Allow a minimum of 30 minutes to come up with a group agreement. Once everyone has arrived, ask a question like: "What things would make this group work well for you?"

You can arrange for people to respond to the question in several ways:

1.   Start a group discussion, with comments being written up on flipchart paper for everyone to see.
2.   Ask for comments on pieces of paper, one comment per sheet, and group them together on the wall.
3.   People start chatting about the question in pairs or small groups.

Once you have drawn out people's ideas, then you can start going through them and see how they can be turned into practical ways of working.
For example, "It is alright to disagree" may be written on one of the pieces of paper. How would this work practically? You could add "by trying to challenge what a person says, not attacking the person themselves", as in the agreement shown below.

A group agreement should be the responsibility of the whole group (you might all want to sign it), not just a chair or leader. It should also be seen as a living document, so date it and be prepared to make changes. If you write out the agreement on flipchart paper it can go up on the wall at each meeting and remind people how the group operates. It can be as detailed or as brief as the group wishes.

Example of a group agreement

Group Agreement - July 2008

- It is alright to ask questions

- We all have different experiences – please try and respect everyone's views and contributions

- It is alright to disagree – by trying to challenge what a person says, not attacking the person themselves

- Try not to talk over other people, but to listen to whoever is talking

- It is OK to change our minds, or opinions

- We will end meetings on time

A group agreement can help form the basis of a constitution
A constitution is a more formal document, but can be based around an existing group agreement. Constitutions can deal with issues of:

- Defining and limiting legal responsibilities

- Getting funding – most funders require to see a constitution

- Showing accountability and openness

- Clarifying responsibilities within the group

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IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN A GROUP

It is important to know who is involved in your group and the experiences they have had that they bring into the group. They will have many skills and knowledge that are useful to the work of the group. However often members do not get to know much about each other because the focus is on doing tasks and keeping a group going, rather than spending time talking abut themselves. Groups may also be so busy doing that they don't take the time to step back and see how they fit in with other groups and organisations.

This table provides some example questions that can be used with a group to help them explore how they are working together and how they relate to others. It has been adapted from a poster 'Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses in Your Agency' as part of a Management and Evaluation bookletthat was produced by National Youth Bureau.

Assessing organisational systems and process	
Environment: Other organisations Policies Funding Partnerships Histories of collective working or conflicts between groups/ organisations	What external groups, agencies or individuals have a significant influence – potential or actual - on the group / organisation? Do we understand what is going on in the outside world? How does the outside world think of us? What does the outside world expect from our group/ organisation?
Purpose and identify: Aims, objectives Strategies	What sort of group organisation are we? What are the values underlying what we do? How clear are they and how widely are they shared? What in practice are we trying to achieve? …..Are our priorities clear? Do different parts of the group / organisation understand how they fit into the whole? How well are we doing what we say we want to do?
Structures and systems: Decision making Planning Evaluation Reflection	Does our structure help us do what we want? Or is it a hindrance? Are everyone's roles clear? Do they make sense as a whole? How far do our structures and systems reflect our values and purpose? How well do our systems permit day-to-day management and co-ordination?

| Assessing organisational systems and process	
People: Volunteers, management committee members, unpaid activists, paid workers	What sort of people exist in our group / organisation? How well is the organisation meeting their needs? Do our individual and collective efforts match our values and purpose? What changes can and should be made? Why?
Resources: People knowledge, skills and experiences Material buildings, equipment, books etc. Financial	What resources human, material, financial do we have? Are they being used effectively … according to our values, purpose and priorities? What could be used to better effect? What other resources are needed? How could we get them? Would more resources really help?
Relationships Internal and external	What mixtures of relationships – formal and informal exist? How does the nature of our relationships reflect our values and purpose? Where are relationships a problem and why? How could good relationships be built on and poor ones tackled? Is there enough openness and willingness to confront areas of difficulty?

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ASSESSING YOUR GROUPS STRENGTHS

It is important to help groups to identify their strengths, what they are collectively and individually good at, and what they have achieved as a group.

Here are some simple techniques that I have used to explore what past life and community based experiences they have.
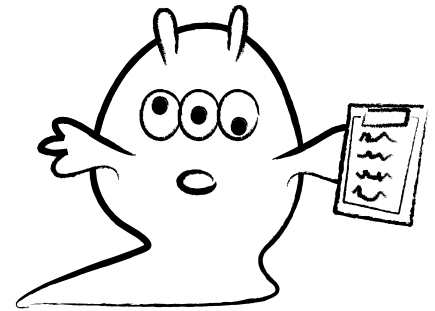
1. Simple story telling exercise for groups:

One exercise is to get the group members to start thinking about their strengths by asking each person in the group to say sentences that begin with 'verbs' doing words that emphasise what is already being done. If it's difficult to get started the whole group could generate a list of such doing words that each person can then build on.

Examples of verbs are:

- Produce,
- Promote,
- Encourage,
- Support,
- Build,
- Organise,
- Campaign,
- Facilitate,
- Train,
- Write, etc.

These doing sentences can then be developed into poems, stories, press releases, opening pages for annual report or photo stories. In the telling and share, focus on how they do it, who is involved and what makes them unique.

When I did a version of this with a group of Somali women they actually came up with words in Somali that emphasised that social part of doing, so by encouraging groups to use their first languages you can unlock different assets or strengths.

2. Assessing existing assets

Drawing or writing asset maps is one way of looking of what is already there. Asset maps encourage thinking about the basic kinds of building blocks that exist in every community group. At the centre of the map, and of the community building process, lie the "gifts" of individual community members – their knowledge, skills, resources, values, and commitments.

What is often overlooked are the perspectives community members themselves can offer when reflecting on what has happened already. Main events that have affected the outcomes or changes in the community can be discussed using methods such as the Reflect Action river process. Reflect Action is an

innovative approach to adult learning and social change. It gives people a chance to look at the issues that are affecting their lives and to consider the kind of collective action they can take to bring about change. More from www.reflect-action.org. The different perspectives held within 'community histories' can be very valuable as a way of moving forward and recognising the links between different views and perspectives.

3. Mapping influence

Mapping is a good way of exploring how the flow of power works within a community organisation and it's wider setting. It's not necessarily about aiming to change power but to understand how power works (political literacy).

Mind mapping, as well as asset mapping techniques can all be used to explore how much influence a group can wield and the opportunities they may have to influence decisions that affect their communities. Mind mapping starts with a critical idea written in the centre of a page and then people start to create a network, like a spiders web, by drawing lines and bubbles which show the key issues and ideas and how they start to link up. There are many web sites devoted to this technique – one useful one is www.mindtools.com which has examples of a mind map.

Mapping of power, how it affects individuals, groups and communities is a really good way of helping people to understand external power that they may be facing, but also the power that they or their group hold. Power can be experienced in different ways and it is important to bring this into the open. The quality and appropriateness of information can affect all of the different ways in which power:

Influence – tenants can influence housing policies, for example the 'Fight for Our Homes' Campaigns in Nelson, near Burnley has used collective action to challenge a top down model of regeneration that was detrimental to the environment and the lives of the community members who are being threatened with the loss of their homes.

Choice – (self-determination) Sometimes those in the know don't even suggest there may be more than one option or solution to a problem.

Consultation – can involve 3 types of activities:

1. Informing people about an issue or proposal
2. Giving people an opportunity to comment on an issue or proposal
3. Dealing with people's comments and views, including giving reasons if the organisations is not going to take them on board.

Organisations in receipt of public funding to provide services or resources for communities make many decisions that affect the lives and well-being of communities. In some matters such as planning there is a legal obligation to consult with community members and the wider public at large.

Participation is a broader idea than consultation. It means giving people a chance to identify their own ideas as well as saying what they'd like to see from organisations with legal responsibilities to community members.

Control All the other areas of power concern accessing decision-making whether with other individuals or groups.

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PROBLEMS A GROUP MAY FACE

Introduction

Problems can be created by both external and internal threats to your aims, group identity and ways of working. If you are truly making positive change you may upset some more powerful people along the way, like politicians and larger organisations, so be ready for any challenges here. Also, beware of raising expectations beyond what your group can realise.

Some common problems that other new Refugee Community Organisations have come across include:

- Lack of funding
- Not having space to work from
- Not having space to run activities
- Problems working with other groups
- The cost of using mobile phones a lot
- Encouraging participation in a project
- People not doing what they say they will
- Financial mishaps
- People not coming to meetings
- Not having clear rules
- Not being able to pay bills
- Personal immigration difficulties

There are no easy answers to these problems. Every situation is different so it is best to try and address the problems yourself as a group, maybe with some outside help from a Community Development Worker or relevant specialist, such as an accountant for money difficulties.
One technique you can use is the 'SCOT' analysis.

'SCOT' analysis

It can be helpful in dealing with problems for the group to be clear about what all the elements of the problem are. One way to do this is to go through the groups' Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats ('SCOT').
This can be done by dividing a large sheet of paper into four boxes, labelled Strengths, Challenges, and so on. In your group discuss each section and write up the comments into the relevant sections. Make sure everyone's comments are written up and everyone can see them.

There are also more interesting ways to do this work, that can help people approach conflict and problems more creatively. You could draw an outline of a tree – don't worry about being too artistic! – and invite the group members to write on the outline:

Strengths – on the tree trunk and roots

Challenges – slugs and bugs crawling over the tree

Opportunities – the leaves and buds

Threats – as rainclouds and lightning

Working in this way can help get the views and thoughts of quieter members of the group, and people who are less confident speakers. The imagery can also help see links and offer new ways of approaching problems and conflict. Make sure that ideas for dealing with the problem that come out of this exercise are noted and people take responsibility for tasks that arise.

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INVOLVING THE NON-RELIGIOUS

Community Development Workers, their employers and the groups they support should be aiming to work inclusively within communities. The government's agenda and the recent equality law outlawing discrimination on the grounds of religious beliefs has led to a focus working with faith communities. The many articles from faith perspectives in this skills manual attest to this development. What can be forgotten is that the non-religious make up the second largest belief group in the country, and that the act has actually made discrimination between those with religious beliefs and those with non-religious beliefs such as humanists illegal. Part Two of the Equality Act 2006 'prohibit[s] discrimination against a person because they do not hold a religion or belief'[1] and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) guidance on the law warns against unintentional 'indirect discrimination [which] occurs when provisions, criteria or practices, that are applied generally, result in people of a particular religion or belief (or lack of religion or belief) being put at a disadvantage.'[2] Humanism is an example of a 'belief' under this law and the non-religious generally are also explicitly covered.

Humanists are atheists or agnostics who try to live good lives based on reason, experience and shared human values. They believe in making the best of their life and in taking responsibility for their actions, working with others for the common good. In 2006 an Ipsos MORI poll found that 36% of people – equivalent to around 17 million adults – are humanists in their basic outlook.[3]

Humanists and the non-religious can feel that there is growing criticism of the non-religious as people with no value system or with little to offer society. The high number of humanist and non-religious people currently volunteering in their local communities proves that this is wholly untrue, and local work to correct such misapprehensions through dialogue is important.

This guidance for Community Development Workers is based on briefings produced by the Humanist Association to support Local Authorities in ensuring equality of service and social inclusion for the non-religious as part of their legal obligations. The association has a Local Development Project, partly funded by DCLG to build the capacity of humanists and the non-religious to contribute to local authorities' work around both 'religion and belief' equality issues, and projects of inter-cultural dialogue.

There are a number of areas that Community Development Workers can contribute to developing practice in this area.

1. Community Development Workers can encourage humanists and other non-religious people to share their perspectives as part of their general work on equality and inclusively. Supporting the Commission for Equality and Human Rights' duty to promote understanding of the importance of good relations 'between members of different groups, and between members of groups and others.'[4] Here a 'group means a group or class of persons who share a common… religion or belief.'[5] The Human Rights Act outlawed discrimination by public bodies on grounds of religion or belief.

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1 Guidance on new measures to outlaw discrimination on grounds of religion or belief in the provision of goods, facilities and services, pg 7
2 *Ibid*, pg8
3 See www.ipsos-mori.com
4 Equality Act 2006 (c. 3)Part 1 — The Commission for Equality and Human Rights, Clause 10, pg5
5 Ibid

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion report, Our Shared Future, noted that there is 'a need for more constructive conversation between those who are religious and those who are not.'[6] It suggested that 'forms of engagement with non-religious belief groups should be a part of the engagement of government with religion and belief groups.'

Public bodies, including local authorities, have a range of strategies on equality, human rights and community cohesion, and where religious groups are included, humanists should be included as a matter of course. The BHA can provide details of local humanists who can offer their perspective to equality and cohesion work .

2. Community development workers advising their employers, local authorities and community groups on consultation strategies and exercises, should be encouraging them to develop dialogue with non-religious people. They will not be communicating with their whole population / community if they exclude the views and opinions of non-religious people. Many issues discussed at local level to inform the work of local authorities and community groups are not solely religious in nature but affect all those in the locality. This includes people who have humanist or non-religious beliefs but whose views are excluded by frameworks that include only religious beliefs or 'faiths'. These issues could range from the practicalities of 'spiritual' needs in healthcare to the provision of education.

Sometimes the structures and agencies supported by local authorities in the equality and diversity field may not be fully inclusive. For example, many local authorities turn to 'interfaith forums' or similar structures to engage with the religion and belief strand of equalities. However, only 5% of these structures have stretched to include non-religious beliefs and have humanist representatives.[7] This means that local authorities may be taking advice from organisations that do not represent the views of a large part of this equality strand. This ignores the clear requirement in the Human Rights Act that the equality strand is considered 'religion and belief' and not 'faith.'

Community workers could usefully remind organistions undertaking a consultation not only to ask religious leaders to represent their communities, along with local councillors or other community leaders, but to seek specific representation for people with non-religious beliefs.

3. Efforts to advance cohesion and integration require community development workers to address the widespread lack of understanding and growing tensions between the religious and non-religious which are as damaging as those between the religious.
Community development workers could tackle this by encourage community groups and public bodies to:

- Explore and share their perspectives
- Challenge the building good relationships only with 'faith groups and organisations' in their localities.
- Use inclusive language
- Do an audit – to check that representatives of the non-religious are included alongside the religious representatives
- Ensure that humanist organisations are consulted if there is any local consultation where religious leaders are being included.
- Ensure all equality initiatives engaging religions are fully inclusive in structure and constitution and have a humanist representative

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6   Our Shared Future, Commission on Integration and Cohesion, June 2007, 6.22, pg 86
7   Inter Faith Organisations in the UK, Inter Faith Network for the UK, 2006

- Include non-religious organisations in the sphere of personal beliefs when compiling or updating all databases of community organisations, and all information directories

- Ensure the equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory policies and training deal with 'religion or belief', as per the law, rather than just 'religion'

Adapted by Val Harris

www.humanism.org.uk

Case Study

MIDLOTHIAN COMMUNITY RADIO - RADIO BY THE PEOPLE, OF THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE

In 2004 the Government passed its Community Radio Order making community radio a new third tier of broadcasting along with commercial radio and the BBC. Community groups could now apply to Ofcom for 5 year FM licences to make 'access radio' a reality, going beyond short term 3 month restricted licences. This opportunity was seized upon by Midlothian Community Media Association, a group of local media enthusiasts, who set up Black Diamond FM (BDFM) as a not for profit entity. Midlothian is a metropolitan region next to Edinburgh, Scotland.

The group and the government believe that community radio creates opportunities for regeneration, training, and employment as well as being a great vehicle for creative and cultural expression.

BDFM is a unique radio service run by volunteers and brings together a diverse range of people, giving local people a 'new' voice. Community radio is a tool for developing civic pride in one's local area, it is a cultural and entertainment tool, a skills improvement tool and a public information vehicle.

BDFM is volunteer intensive – it has 30 volunteers on board helping with broadcasting, administration, training, technical support, and marketing. Volunteers were recruited by word of mouth and press releases. The initial recruitment was undertaken by Midlothian Council's Community Learning and Development Team.

The group, which now has charitable status, took 3 years to get from its first meeting through applying for a licence to actually broadcasting. The original volunteer group has evolved during that time into a board of Directors and have been supported through this process by members of the Community Learning and Development Team who provided information and advice on working relationships; protocols; grant applications, finance and funding; project management; staffing and volunteers; monitoring and evaluation.

In May, 2007, BDFM began to broadcast to up to 90,000 listeners from the Council's Community Learning Centre at Newbattle, Newtongrange. The station currently broadcasts live 14 hours a day & runs automated programming for the rest of the day.

The station appointed 2 members of staff (full time but temporary for 6 months) one was a training officer post and the other development worker, who have now finished. The station is currently looking at grant applications and sponsorship, marketing and PR as it is recognised staff are required to take the fledgling station to the next level of success. More volunteers have been attracted to the station through press items and word of mouth, and they have taken on administration, technical, managerial, finance and broadcasting tasks.

There have been difficulties with personality clashes amongst members and volunteer burn out. Attracting sustainable funding has also been problematic. The group seems to lunge from difficulty to difficulty due to financial constraints and in-house 'debates.' However, the group are producing quality

programming, including community oriented programmes e.g. local history, local readings of short stories, local plays, local musicians. This is radio by the people, of the people for the people. The station is a major source of on air local information, letting folk know what is happening in their community through the broadcasting of local public information on health, housing, transport, community safety, the environment, learning opportunities, events and raising awareness of issues. The group intend to gather information about listenership levels and to evaluate the qualitative aspects of their work

It is early days and the group have succeeded in setting up and running a wonderful, 'professional' community station, despite difficulties, and the group are confident that the station will continue to go from strength to strength.

Further Information:

www.midlothianradio.org.uk
www.blackdiamondfm.com

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The views expressed in this article are not necessarily those of Midlothian Council nor the board of BDFM.

Case Study

STOKE PAN WHOLEFOODS PURCHASING CO-OP

Pan started in the early 1990's in Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. It was set up to help people to buy direct from Suma Wholefoods Coop. www.suma.co.uk

It is based on the principles of:

- Community development
- Affordable wholefoods
- Co-operative trading
- Cruelty-free/ fair trade produce
- Recycling

It is based around our web site, which our treasurer set up and he updates it when we get the latest price list sent to us by Suma as a database. Our website enables members to:

- Share information + share bulk orders
- Search for products
- Place an order
- View their account status

By ordering in bulk Pan members cut costs, food miles, food waste and packaging. The order is collated and then placed with Suma each month by one member and is delivered to another members house for collection. The person who receives the delivery splits it up for each member to collect their order. Many people collect their friends or neighbours orders for them to reduce travel.

A local group Purple Berry is setting up an organic café project to train and employ people with learning disabilities. They will be able to receive our deliveries for us, which will get bigger as we get new members.

Pan membership is free. Everyone pays a small subscription of 10% of their order or £3 whichever is the most, to cover admin costs. Members are asked to also give some time to support the groups running and development.

There are about 50 members, about 30 are active members (people who order regularly). We have a committee of 7 people. We are all volunteers.

Group members are also interested in recycling and other environmental practices. We are keen to reduce waste, support local food growers by buying from organic vegetable box schemes. We buddy people who do not have access to the internet with another member who places their order for them.

We want to develop our contribution to local community development and social inclusion. To help us develop we held a members event in April 2007.

At the event we had:

- Displays of information about Co-operatives, Suma, organic, fair trade, vegan and vegetarian, food growing and reducing waste/ recycling.
- Food and drinks that can be bought from Suma for people to try/ taste.
- Packaging for people to see what different sized bulk items look like.
- 2 computers set up with our website on to demonstrate the online ordering to members.

We asked members what they could give to Pan using the jigsaw technique (see identifying needs section).

We asked members what they would like from Pan – everyone was given a piece of re-used paper with a handshake symbol on it upon which to write/ draw what they want from Pan.

We asked members for recycling tips. We gave everyone a piece of re-used paper with the recycling logo printed on it to write/ draw their tip on and then to place their tips into a blue local Council kerbside collection paper recycling bag.

We will use the information we gained to help us develop and for articles for our members newsletter.

Further information and contact:
If you would like to find out more visit the website www.stokepan.org, email the group on: stokepan@ gmail.com for information. There is a list of useful links and contacts on our website.

ORGANISING EVENTS - SIGN-UP SHEET

This is practical tool to find out who can come and support an event or a meeting. The group members fill it in themselves. Details of the event are written at the top of the sheet, the example below is of a litter pick. This can easily be created on a computer.

Name	Sorry, cannot come	Maybe I can come	Yes, I will be there	Comments
Sumita	X			Working all day
Rhoda		X		Depends if can get a babysitter
Aslam			X	Has gloves
David	X			Exam next day
Kasher			X	
Penny			X	May bring niece
Delores			X	I'm very keen
Zaira			X	Health and Safety expert
Sue	X			
Totals	3	1	5	7/9

Contact:
John Huff, Director - euro_bureau@hotmail.com

MAKING MEETINGS WORK

Introduction

There are many different ways to run a meeting. It is always worth planning a meeting so it goes well. If the group is new, and there is only one person or just a few of you organising the group, you can be in a position where there is a lot of news and decisions to be made. You need to think about the rest of the group. For them they may be hearing the news you are presenting for the first time. You may be getting familiar with what the group has to do – set up a bank account, writing a constitution, applying for funding – but how do you pass on information so that everyone else can make decisions that are clearly understood.

Here are some ideas to help you:

1. Have an agenda that everyone can see

Use a large sheet of paper stuck on the wall (flipchart or an old poster) and write up all the different things that need to be talked about. This will help everyone else in the group keep track of where the discussion is going.

2. Check everyone is happy with what is on the agenda

You may need to explain why certain points are written up, but try not to get distracted into talking about the points themselves yet. You want to check if there are any changes or additions – other people may have information to bring to the meeting too.

3. An agenda might include:

- Welcome and introductions
- Read through last meeting's minutes – were actions done?
- Report on financial position of the group
- Particular subjects, such as planning activities, discussing a funding application or ideas for setting up an advice service. This may be the main part of your meeting.
- Break
- Summarise actions agreed on
- Choose who is going to be the facilitator and note taker next time
- Date of next meeting
- End of meeting (with a time to aim for)

4. Ask someone to take notes of the meeting

Also known as 'minutes', these record the discussion and any decisions made. If they involve an action being done by someone, the minutes should include the names of people who are going to do the work.

You may want to ask someone in advance to take minutes so they can be prepared. If you are organising the meeting you should bring pen and paper for the notetaker. It might be useful to buy a notebook so that all meeting minutes can be in the same place for future reference.

5. Running the meeting

How you run the meeting will depend on how many points are on the agenda and how formal or informal you and the rest of the group want it to be. Explain to everyone that you want to go through the agenda points one by one. If it is something you have been working on, by all means introduce the news that you know of. If someone else has been doing that work, invite them to tell the group what the news is. Some people may feel shy to talk in front of a group, so be encouraging and supportive. If people interrupt with their own views, ask them to wait and let the person who has been doing the work finish their report first. Then ask for comments on what has been said – especially questions to clarify what has been said. When you think a discussion has got as far as it can go, see if you can try and:

- Summarise what actions have been agreed
- Who has agreed to do the work
- When it will be done by

It can be useful to write up the agreed actions on the paper on the wall for everyone to see. Then you can move on to the next point on the agenda.

6. Take a break

Don't forget to take a break during the meeting. People will take in information differently, so it can be helpful to allow people to have a cup of tea and chat with each other more informally. Don't let a break last too long though, or turn into the meeting ending.

7. Summarise what has been agreed at the end

It can be helpful to summarise at the end of the meeting all the agreed actions and who is going to do them. This can help make sure that everyone is singing the same tune. It can also be a positive ending, so that the whole group can see things are happening. A summary of who is doing what will also show who is doing the work – if it is all one or two people, and this is highlighted, this is the group's chance to change that by splitting the work more equally.

8. Date of next meeting

Don't forget to agree the date of your next meeting and where it is going to be. If you want to take turns at planning for and leading the meeting, who is going to do this next can also be decided, as well as who will take minutes next time.

Contact:
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HOW TO HOLD PRODUCTIVE COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Introduction

This is a checklist for anyone who is organising community group meetings, this may be the Chairperson, the secretary or a facilitator.

1. Time is everyone's most valuable thing

Wasting people's time with dull, long, unnecessary and unproductive meetings, will cause anger for wasting their time and for taking them away from what they wish they had done instead of coming to the community meeting. Always ask yourself: should this meeting be held; is it necessary?

2. The reason to hold a meeting is to plan action

Your community group exists for action, not meetings. It is very easy to slip into the opposite; meeting because it is the first week of the month, for example.

3. Plan the meeting Pre-plan the meeting as as if you were putting on a play:

- Remind people to come. Don't rely on the fact that you sent out the agenda. Call all members three days before the meeting. Have as many people as possible make the calls. Remind each member of the: date - time – place of the meeting.
- Delegate tasks such as: serving soft drinks - welcoming people - layout of the room - clearing up afterwards.
- Tell people why the meeting is important, the main issue, and the decision that has to be made. Ask each person directly "can you come?" Then say, "Good, I'll be looking forward to seeing you".
- Always plan for fewer people than you expect. Empty chairs are a "turn-off". I let people coming into the meeting get a chair from the chair stack. Don't let the layout of the meeting room be dictated by the caretaker.
- If the sun is hot make sure the blinds are pulled long before the meeting starts. If the weather is cold, check the heating gets the room warm before the community meeting starts.

4. The Agenda

- Have a printed agenda which is sent out at least 11 days before your committee meeting. If you have a building, then stick-up the agenda on the front door.
- Pruning the agenda is your job, whatever length it starts or grows to.
- Limit the total length of the meeting; write the closing time on the bottom of the agenda.
- Put peoples names beside agenda items so they know they are needed at the meeting:

  Item 4. To decide on what to do about the overflowing river in the Muddy Flats part of our neighbourhood. [Please see action report prepared by Ms Jian Fan]

- Put the proposed date of the next meeting at the bottom of your agenda.
- If you have an item on the agenda with the title "Any Other Business"; get people into the habit of telling you beforehand what topic they will raise under that agenda item.

5. The Chairperson

- The chairperson is the leader of the meeting and has the job of moving the meeting forward.
- You need to know your Constitution, many community groups lose sight of their reason for existence so always have a copy available at the meeting.
- The chairperson needs to know before the meeting what has to be decided for each item on the agenda.
- The chairperson may decide to ask each person at the meeting what they think about an item on the agenda, so everyone at the meeting gets a chance to voice their opinion.
- Arrange that as chairperson you sit near the door, so you can see people coming and welcome them.

6. Decisions

- Have your own proposal ready for each agenda item. Never have an item on the agenda if you have no idea what the answer is in terms of action to be done by whom, when and how much it will cost.
- It is no good getting to an agenda item and then chairperson saying; "What would you like to do?"

    Item 5. "We need to debate if we are going to support or not the Mayor's proposed voter registration campaign ". "Ms Liao Zijing I believe you have a proposal to start us off?"

- In a democratically run meeting, two groups have rights. The majority on a topic has rights and so does the minority. It is the right of the majority to end the debate and move on to the next item on the agenda.
- One way to settle differences of opinion is to vote which can avoid going round-and-round in circles.
- The person at the community meeting, who writes down decisions, is often called the minute's secretary. The minutes are a record of the exact wording of decisions made. Not a record of who argued with whom over which word to include or leave out.
- At the start of the meeting check there is somebody to take the minutes.

    Item 1. Before we start, I see our Minutes Secretary is absent. Can I propose that Ms Liu Yang stands-in and takes the minutes of this meeting: all agreed? Thank you Ms Liu.

- With complicated decisions, it is useful to ask the minute's secretary to read out the wording they have written down.
- Agree who will do what by when and inside what budget

    Item 6. Agreed Ms Gao Bo [assisted by Youth Club members] will produce cardboard posters size A0, spelling out the words "NO CUTTING DOWN OF TREES IN CERAMIC CITY ROAD". To be done before August Bank Holiday Monday at a cost of all materials not higher that £30.

7. After the Meeting

- At the end of the meeting stand by the door; and say "Goodbye" to everyone who came.
- The chairperson needs to check the follow-up on decisions within the timeframe agreed.
- Call or go and see those absent from the meeting to bring them up-to-date with the actions agreed. Tell people the date of the next meeting.

- Have a sheet of paper with the heading EVALUATION and give it out to all at the meeting, so they can write down their comments. Collect the Evaluation Forms at the end of the meeting. Read the forms next day, and improve!

- Beware of people going off and doing what they wanted to see happen even though they were out-voted at the meeting.

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INFORMATION IS POWER

Ordinary people get more power when they get more information.

Information has to be:

- Easy to understand
- Easy to use

Professionals are taught to use lots of words when they speak and write.

Many professions have their own jargon. If you can use the jargon you are "in". If you do not understand the jargon you are "out". This can be true for community development.

"Easy Read" gives power to everyone. Everyone can be "in".

What is "Easy Read"?

"Easy Read" is writing that is:

- Easy to read in your head

- Easy to read out loud

- Easy to understand when it is read to you
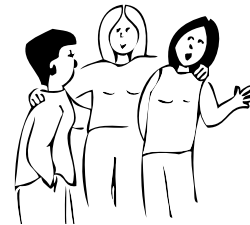
"Easy Read" looks easy to understand. It often uses picture or symbols.

How to do "Easy Read"

Words

- Check the Plain English Campaign's website. They have lots of ideas to help. www.plainenglish.co.uk
- When you use numbers, it is best to put the number (1) not the word (one).

Sentences

Only put one idea in each sentence. Try to use less than 15 words in a sentence.
Never split a sentence between 2 pages.
Some sentences are very long. Think:

- Can I use bullet points?
- Can I split the sentence into 2 sentences?

Text

- Use a san serif font like Arial or Century Gothic. This means they do not have little tags on the letters. Tags on letters make it harder for people to read if they have dyslexia or visual impairment.

- Use 14 point or larger

- Use 1.5 or double line spacing
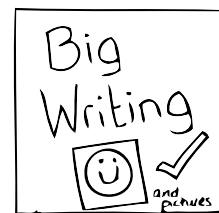
Try **not** to use:

- Capital letters

- Underlining

- Italics

Layout

- Use very large margins

- Use extra space between paragraphs

- Sometimes you need to give people a pack of papers. This often happens in meetings. It is a good idea to print each item on a different colour paper. Then you can show people the colour they need to find. That is easier than telling them to find the heading on the paper.

Pictures

Make sure the pictures fit the words. Try out the pictures on someone who will tell you if they work. People can use pictures or symbols to:

- Help them find the paragraph or page they want to read
- Check they have understood the words
- Pictures make information look interesting and friendly. This is a big help for people who do not enjoy reading.

Finding out more

You can find out about easy information from:

Disability Rights Commission, now part of the Equality and Human Rights Commission www.equalityhumanrights.com

Mencap www.mencap.org.uk

Norah Fry Institute, Bristol University www.bris.ac.uk/norahfry

Plain English Campaign www.plainenglish.co.uk

RNIB www.rnib.org.uk

RNID www.rnid.org.uk

Contact:

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01248 361483

WORKING BILINGUALLY

Background

The UK is now a multicultural country. Although English is the dominant language, respect for individuals and communities needs to include a respect for their cultural background and, of course, language.

The majority of the world's population is bilingual.   However, the UK cannot yet claim this as its norm, nor reap the benefits bilingualism usually brings. Within the UK, some indigenous languages continue to be spoken by communities notably: Cymraeg (Welsh) in Wales, Gaelic in Scotland and Irish in Ireland. These languages have equal status to English within their countries. There are also many other languages to be heard on our streets. These include languages spoken by now established communities, migrant workers, refugees and visitors, and signing can also be seen.

In working with socially excluded communities and groups our role as Community Development Workers is to listen, build relationships, trust, empathise and empower. Successful communication is clearly at the centre of achieving this desired relationship. Language (including jargon) can be seen as an essential part in helping to achieve successful communications or alternatively alienating and creating barriers. Language is an essential part of a person's identity, their self-respect and self-esteem. Language is also an integral part of people's community and networks and they generally express themselves better in their mother tongue. They are usually most comfortable discussing difficult issues in their strongest language.

> Bilingualism is the ability to speak two languages in aspects of everyday life. Some people see themselves as totally bilingual; most people prefer to use one language rather than the other in different situations. Therefore, ensuring language choice is essential. (Welsh Language Board)

Note that in these articles:
The word 'event' is used in the text for ease but good practice outlined should apply equally to any Community Development Work.
The word 'translation' is used in the text but the word interpretation is, in practice, also used.
The term 'minority language' used in the text means minority in the UK.

Contact:
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CHECKLIST OF GOOD PRACTICE IN RUNNING BILINGUAL

1. Consider and plan for language needs in advance

- Think about language needs from the beginning of your planning.
- Consider what is needed for the group / community you are working with to ensure they are able to participate fully. Ask them what their needs are in terms of language – both written and spoken as these may well be different. Make no assumptions – ask people.
- How you advertise an event will have an impact on who comes and how comfortable they are going to be using their preferred language. Be aware that the language you use, the style of the poster or leaflet, who is coming to speak etc. may mean that you might not get people who may need or want a translation service coming to an event, because they don't feel they will be welcome and / or confident enough to contribute at the event.

2. Consider how best to create a successful bilingual event

Making the decision whether you will need one or more translators is not always as easy as it may seem.

- Consider carefully in advance and at the earliest possible opportunity, how many people are likely to want to contribute in a language other than English. Perhaps all participants will want to speak the same language, so your event may take place in another language altogether excluding the need for a translator or translation. There will usually be a cost associated with using a translator, so clearly identifying what the need is - how many people, what language(s) etc. and identifying how this may be funded if needed, are important early steps to take.
- Consider how you will deal with the situation if no translation service is available and people attend, who wish to use a different language (or two) to that planned for the event. Ideally you may choose to have a translator available but this is not always possible e.g. there may not be the resources to support this at every event.

For more in-depth information/ guidance on 'Working Bilingually using Translation Services' see the next article in this section .

3. Consider the options for enabling your event to be bilingual without using a paid translation service

Your options may include the following:

a) Speakers / facilitators translating for themselves
Choose speakers or facilitators who can present information in the minority language and they will need to summarise in English (for example) at regular and fairly short stages. Information should not be translated word for word exactly as said, as it will take too long and all present will lose interest, especially those who are bilingual, as they will hear everything twice.

b) 'Whispering' translation (often by peers)
A bilingual person sits next to a person who needs translation and whispers a summarised translation or signs during the event.

c) Same language discussion groups

Group people who would like to speak the same language together for group work so they can undertake work in their preferred language. However, be aware that this can sometimes reduce the extent of information exchange and restrict relationship development as the same people may be continuously undertaking group work together. Consider whether this is an important issue, it may not be, it will depend on what you are trying to do.

Notes of discussion, if not noted in English, may need to be translated for all to access information. Produce any notes in the original language they were written in too.

d) Notes to be produced bilingually after event

If after trying to do this you are unable to do any more, the notes of the event could be produced bilingually, but check that people want this, as levels of literacy in people's mother tongue do vary.

e) Hosting a series of separate events in different languages

One option, especially if the event may require more than two languages to be used, is to run a number of separate one language events focusing on the language preferred by participants. Facilitators etc. able to speak the chosen language will obviously need to be recruited for each event.

4. Before the event

- Send out information about the event bilingually.
- Produce bilingual programme or agendas for the day.
- Arrange for bilingual speakers and facilitators to be available.

5. On the day of the event

- Arrange for bilingual people to greet those arriving.
- Open the event in the minority language if you can or get someone to use the language as early as possible so that its clear from the start that people are very welcome and encouraged to use their preferred language.
- Ask all speakers to avoid jargon, acronyms etc. where possible as these are often difficult to translate and to speak clearly, slightly more slowly than normal and to build in gaps during presentation.

6. Following the event:

- Notes of a bilingual event may well need to be produced bilingually but check what people want.

_____

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WORKING BILINGUALLY – USING TRANSLATION SERVICES

Consider if you will need a translator to be present early on in drawing up your plans. The decision should be based on how many people are likely to need or wish to use a translation facility but, in reality it will also depend on funding available, some community groups may not have the resources to do this. It may be so important to engage this targeted group of individuals, and as fully as possible, that even if one person will need the facility in order to participate you will need the service to be available.

You may have no idea how many people may use the translation or interpretation service, including sign language. You may wish to pencil in the event in a translators diary and confirm the booking a week or two later when you have asked people via booking form, or face to face, what their needs are.

Some important points about using Translators
Translation (sometimes also known as interpretation) is usually from the 'minority' language into English. However, other options may be available if translators can offer this, so be clear what you need in the circumstances you will be working in. It may even be necessary occasionally for more than one language to be translated at the same event.

- Using formal translation services will cost a bit. It is a professional service and is not cheap.

- Speak to and book a translator as soon as possible as they do get booked up   and are often not available at short notice.

- There are often standard qualifications available for translators. Ask what qualifications and experience they have. (In Wales, for example, there isa directory of translators who have achieved recognised qualifications.)

- Speak directly to the translator and explain what the event is and what you will need. Ask if they have experience of a similar event and if they feel they would be able to undertake the role in this particular setting. Translators often develop an 'expertise' in one or more fields. They will need to know how to translate some key words or phrases and if they have some understanding of the work area this can help a great deal.

- Discuss with the translator whether more than one translator will be required. If the demands will be high you may well need more than one as they will need regular breaks, usually 30 minutes translating then a break.

- Check out the acoustics at the intended venue. If acoustics are bad the translator as well as participants may not be able to hear what is said.

- The format of the event may need to be modified to take into account translation needs. The type of group work needs to be thought through if only one translator is available at the event. Gaps will be needed during presentations to allow the translator to catch up, making the process lengthier, particularly if they are not using simultaneous translation equipment such as headsets / headphones.

- Agree with the translator who is responsible for arranging the translation equipment, if these are to be used at the event. Events involving Black and minority ethnic communities do not often use simultaneous translation equipment but rather translation is carried out by a translator standing with the speaker, re-stating or summarising what has been said in the other language. So, make no assumption about what the norm is in the circumstances you are working in, ask if unsure. If headsets are to be used for translation, they are often used

in Welsh language settings, be aware that not all professional translators have their own equipment. So, responsibility for ordering these, picking them up and for their safe return will need to be agreed. (Headsets cost over £200 each to buy/ replace.) Don't forget to work out how many headsets are likely to be needed.

- Confirm booking with the translator in writing giving all details about the event including directions to the venue.

- Provide the translator with as much information in advance as well as copies of any handouts and presentations that will be used.

- If using electrical equipment, check that there are enough accessible sockets in the room.

Before the event

- Send out information about the event bilingually.

- Produce bilingual programme or agendas for the day.

- Arrange for bilingual speakers and facilitators to be available.

On the day of the event

- Arrange for bilingual people to greet those arriving.

- Ensure that the translator has a place to sit and that a table or other requirements are planned into the layout of the room etc. Ask the translator in advance what their preference is as to where they are situated. If using electrical equipment they will need to be fairly close to a socket and most translators usually ask to be able to see the face of any speakers.

- Ask the translator to arrive a little before your event begins in order to set up any equipment being used, decide where they are best placed etc.

- At the start of the event, ask if all the participants who wish to use the service can hear the translator, if the translation equipment is working and that headsets are being worn correctly where these are being used.

- Open the event in the minority language if you can or get someone to use the language as early as possible so that its clear from the start that people are very welcome and encouraged to use their preferred language.

- Ask all speakers to avoid jargon, acronyms etc. where possible as these are often difficult to translate and to speak clearly, slightly more slowly than normal and to build in gaps during presentation.

- Where headsets are being used ensure all of these are gathered in before people leave.

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SPEAKERS CORNER

Introduction

Young people sometimes find it difficult to express themselves, especially when the process is formal or rigid. Young people might be too shy to speak out, have low self-esteem, or lack confidence in expressing their views. They may not have an appropriate platform to air their views and so internalise theirs feelings and emotions to arrive at their own conclusions. Our role as informal educators is to create opportunities and the environment that is conducive to learning, allowing young people to discover new life skills that are important to them.

The concept of 'Speakers Corner' has emanated from the infamous Speakers Corner that takes place in Hyde Park, London. The historical context is that it has been a place of assembly for those arguing for their rights since the middle of the 19th Century. It was here that the Chartists, the Reform League, the May Day demonstrators and the Suffragettes held many of their greatest battles, tens of millions have assembled here and many have won reforms.

The Technique

Time needed is 45 minutes to 1 hour

Ground rules

- Everyone has the right to their opinion
- Don't personalise things –criticise the point not the individual
- Use the normal ground rules for the centre or group

Materials required; flipchart and pens; soapbox; seating.

As a group, let participants decide on the topic that they would like to discuss, after several suggestions have been put forward by them.

Then, one young person's point of view is presented by him / her, on the soapbox, whilst others have the opportunity to agree or disagree.

The facilitator's role is to paraphrase points so that they are fully understood by others i.e. 'are you saying this…''do you mean that….', and also to keep the dialogue free flowing, helping where necessary.

It is important that the facilitator is not seen to be taking sides and therefore must remain impartial at all times… it is about young people and their thoughts and ideas.

Other workers could help by being in the audience and contribute ideas and there should be one worker appointed to jot things down on the flipchart paper so the facilitator can refer to points raised.

Finishing the session

- Key points made should be summarised – those that agree and those that disagree
- Current legislation around a subject can be given (if known)
- Further reading or places where young people can access further information could be given

Benefits of Speakers Corner

1. 'Speakers Corner' allows freedom of speech; and is hopefully a learning process for all

2. Participants get a chance to share their knowledge with others

3. A platform is created allowing controlled debate, where different perspectives can be aired

4. It gives the young people confidence to hold a proper debate with others being able to challenge their views

5. A safe space is given where prejudices and stereo-types can be overcome

6. It is an empowering experience through dialogue for young people

7. It could potentially lead to identifying new projects and programmes, if it is felt that topics need further discussion/ clarification

8. It allows young people to familiarise themselves with the group work process found in youth forums and committees

9. Young people speak about issues that matter to THEM

10. Young people can opt to join in or refrain from participating – they are in control.

Issues to consider

- Do not assume that young people will take one stance or another; the facilitators need to be impartial for the dialogue to be truly reflective of young people's views

- Do not make assumptions about race, culture or religion

- It is best if the group has met a few times before so that they feel comfortable that they can share their view point with others

- Confidentiality is something that young people need to be reminded of each time a group meets

- Sometimes young people may get personal. It is important to stop this for it not only distracts others, but young people can get upset

- It is best to have a quiet room as once dialogue starts, it is very frustrating if you keep getting disturbed

- Participants may have some difficulty engaging, particularly if it is their first time

- It is important for the facilitator to always keep the discussion focussed on the topic, bringing it back if young people go off on a tangent

Further Information:

You obtain the 'Speakers Corner' booklet at: www.muslimyouthskills.co.uk

Contact:

Tafazal Mohammad, Active Communities Together
www.activecommunitiestogether.co.uk

Case Study

INTERFUSION: PORTSMOUTH YOUTH DIVERSITY FORUM

Background

Portsmouth is one of the Government's 88 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas. It has diverse ethnic communities and issues of economic well-being, social exclusion and crime. A youth interfaith forum was initiated by Portsmouth Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) funded by their National Association (NASACRE) in 2005. In 2006 the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund (FCCBF) awarded a grant to sustain and build the forum and continued to support us for another year. Two young people were actively involved in appointing an adult Co-ordinator. We have a larger organisation acting as the employing agent managing the financial infrastructure.

Interfusion

Interfusion is an independent group directed by an Executive Committee of young people (aged 13–19) of all faiths, belief systems or none, working together with a Co-ordinator to seek understanding and dialogue between communities. By involving themselves in the running of the Forum, often through the monthly meetings, they have opportunities to develop skills and talents in areas such as communication, art and design, publicity, finance and organisation.

The Executive Committee chose the name 'Interfusion: Portsmouth Youth Diversity Forum' to reflect that membership is inclusive and also open to those of no faith. They designed their own logo, now seen on polo shirts and balloons. They restructured the Forum to be run by an Executive Committee of young people, with an Advisory Panel (over 18's) and Members. They wrote the Constitution with Rules and Responsibilities starting with examples from other organisations. The Executive decides what Interfusion does. This might be running workshops at the Portsmouth GCSE RE Students Conference; supporting Thursday's Child Interfaith Festival; being interviewed by a local radio station - Wave 105, or, of course, eating and talking.

An Executive Committee member says 'Young people can have radically different views and issues to adults – to get that difference we need to run it! This is a group FOR young people – it makes sense that it is run BY the young people'.

Advice from the young people:

- Have a mixture of formal and fun stuff: for the Executive Committee include pizzas along with the business side

- A balance of power must be struck between the over 18 year olds – (legally necessary) and the younger people. The 'responsible adult' must remember they are there to facilitate what the youth want.

- The Executive decides a course of action when the members can't agree.

The Co-ordinator / facilitator should:

- Be non-judgemental, understanding, friendly, co-operative and possibly psychic

- Accept young people for who they are

- Get a dialogue going, but don't be surprised if there are frank expressions of opinion that might not be that well thought out. Understand that and show tolerance

- Realise that everyone's opinions need to be valued! Welcome and encourage ideas and suggestions. Watch out for people feeling excluded

- Be sensitive to cultural or faith differences – someone might be vegetarian for example

- Be patient if a young person is trying to say something but is a bit shy or inarticulate

- Make sure the young people have the final say.

- Think about what will happen if you fail to raise money

Advice from the Co-ordinator:

- Ensure the young people have ownership of the Constitution, with agreed Roles and Responsibilities and clear aims. Agree an effective and fair decision-making and voting structure

- A professional (but relaxed) approach helps to raise the profile of the group and reassure potential funders

- Be prepared to bridge the gap between external adults and agencies and the young people Don't forget that parents / guardians will set different boundaries and have the final say about whether young people can turn up or make a commitment

Young people get far more out of their group when they have control and put something in.

Contact:
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Case Study

THE OASIS MUSIC PROJECT - DEVELOPING AND SUPPORTING A YOUTH MUSIC PROJECT

Introduction

The Oasis Project is based in the Woughton Parish area of Milton Keynes. A number of challenges face this locality; it ranks among the 20% most deprived areas of the UK (based on the Index for Multiple Deprivation 2004) with particular issues around achievement in education, training and skills.
Young people involved in the project wanted the chance to make music, in late 2005 the Oasis Music Project was born. The Music Project has grown out of a partnership between committed young people, Close to Home and the Energizer Bus Project, supported by the Community Development team at Milton Keynes Council.

Young people are involved in a number of activities, including as Peer educators, in the production of music, lyric writings, recording in a professional studio and preparing pieces for performance. Since the projects inception over 100 young people have been through the door, over 50 original pieces of music have been produced and 25 young people have gained level 2 qualifications in either functional skills or Digital Music Production.
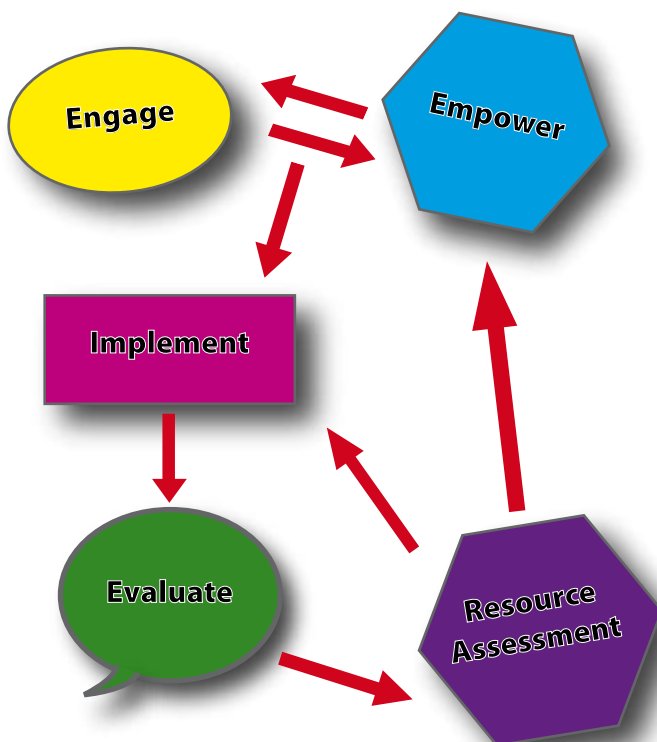
The Project Cycle

This diagram looks to simplify the development process for a youth project. Reality of course rarely follows a model, so think of this as a guide, a checklist or prompt.

It has no set time frame, though ideally we cycle round regularly, checking progress, assessing what resources we've gained, implementing change and further empowering those involved where possible.

Any effort at engagement works best if simultaneous with empowerment, hence the 'double arrow'.

It's suggested that a development worker, whether new to an area or not, would start any project by assessing what resources (capital, people, material) they might put into play.

Engage

✳ Ideas session with youth group and Close to Home group
✳ Key individuals from previous projects helped develop and promote
✳ Promotion by young people at youth clubs / events / school
✳ Music session linked to discussion session with Close to Home – chance to attract young people from one to the other.
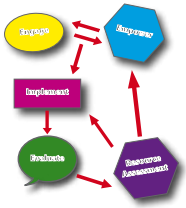
→ Young people produced and controlled 'Myspace' site
→ Young people perform at local music events
→ Increased ownership leads to word of mouth support

Empower

✳ Worked from initial ideas of young people
✳ Young people involved in promoting, producing materials and 'branding' the session
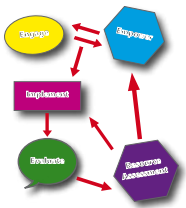
→ Peer educators trained to teach music to others
→ Steering group formed, funding applied for and received
→ Group agreed ground rules / aims / targets

Evaluate

✳ Bi-monthly verbal / written evaluations from those involved
✳ Workers evaluation
✳ Suggestions box
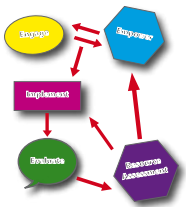
→ Feedback via Myspace site
→ Monthly discussion / training with Peer educators / workers
→ Steering group discussions

✳ Existing relationships with workers / young people / agencies
✳ Own skills; may need to demonstrate to enthuse
✳ Local people; suitable skills to support (e.g. lyric writing)
✳ Nurturing potential resources; people as well as pounds
✳ Equipment; do other groups have equipment that is under used? (often the case with music equipment)
✳ Partnerships; this project grew with aid of partnership between voluntary / statutory groups working with young people. Pool resources; try innovative (maybe seemingly incongruous) link ups and combinations of activities
✳ Corporate support; distribution companies to donate vinyl, local shops to supply sundries (such as adaptors, blank cds)

Resource Assessment
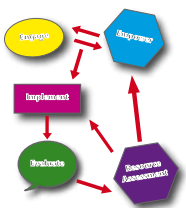
→ With each cycle your resource pot should get bigger!

Contact:
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