

# Voluntary groups

## HELPING THEM DEVELOP



A report on the Small Groups  
Worker Scheme

  
Trust  
for  
London

The Trust for London was formed in 1986 with an endowment from the sale of some assets of the former Greater London Council. The endowment fund provides an income of about £600,000 a year which is distributed to small, locally-based community organisations with charitable purposes. Most of these organisations are entirely voluntary or with no more than one or two paid staff. The grants are small sum for either for either capital or revenue costs, with a maximum of £10,000 a year.

The Trust for London is managed by the City Parochial Foundation.

Applications are considered from small groups in any London borough as follows:

- any self help group but particularly women's groups and young and elderly people's groups
- supplementary and mother tongue schools
- organisations working with people with disabilities
- refugee and migrant groups.

Small groups can also apply for start-up grant and training costs.

Full details of grant making procedures and applications are given in a leaflet Grant guidelines 1997-2001: priorities, policies and procedures, available free from the Trust for London, 6 Middle Street, London EC1A 7PH. Tel: 020 7606 6145

## Grant guidelines

1997-2001

PRIORITIES

POLICIES

PROCEDURES



# Voluntary groups

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## **Acknowledgements**

The report was written by Maknun Gamaledin-Ashami  
and Alison Harker

The Trust for London wishes to thank all the agencies  
which took part in this Scheme, the Small Groups  
Workers who pioneered it and the small groups  
themselves who so enthusiastically took up the  
services on offer and who provide so much  
with such few resources

The cover photographs illustrate the activities of a  
number of groups - Milaap, Richmond and Kingston  
Accessible Transport, Kingston Early Years Resource  
Centre, and the Somali Community Information Centre,  
Westminster - which have all benefited from support  
through the Small Groups Worker scheme.  
All these photos and others in this report were  
taken by Mark Crick.

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Wherever possible, jargon has been avoided in this report. However, shorthand has been used in two cases:

- councils for voluntary service (some of which operate under titles such as 'voluntary action', 'social council' or centre for voluntary service) normally appear under the umbrella term CVS;
- small groups workers are referred by the initials SGW.

# Foreword

**I**n recent years the voluntary sector has been affected by some of the enormous changes which have taken place in national policies. Care in the community, the changes in the asylum and immigration legislation, the changes in welfare benefits which impact on young people, the unemployed and the homeless, changes in the education and penal systems, all of these and many others have served to make the life and work of charitable organisations more complicated, and harder. The contract culture has brought additional problems for some. The Lottery, whilst not a totally unmixing blessing, undoubtedly has presented enormous opportunities for some charitable organisations.

Through all of this the voluntary sector has struggled, survived for the most part and in some cases organisations have positively thrived. But what of the small groups? Have they survived and thrived? How have those groups fared which are marginalised?

When the Trust for London undertook its consultation in 1987, staff were told repeatedly by the voluntary sector that "small groups lose out". This premise which was born out by the Trust's first four years of operation persuaded the Grants Committee of the Trust in 1992 to establish the small groups worker scheme and this report graphically describes its success.

The Trust for London's abiding interest is in small groups. The Trust has always been impressed by the resourcefulness and commitment of those who work in such groups and has itself been committed to trying different ways of helping small groups to develop. Development does not necessarily go

hand-in-hand with growth and some small groups will never, and should never grow into large organisations, but it is important that small groups can develop and flourish in their local communities. Services should be as professional as possible to meet the needs. Those who work in small groups should have the same opportunities for training and personal development as staff in larger organisations.

The small groups worker scheme did help groups, including those which were very marginalised, to develop. It provided opportunities for groups and workers in them. The work was often intensive and considerable time had to be spent with individual groups, but the process showed how enormous returns could result from a relatively modest financial outlay.

This was a very exciting initiative for the Trust; we have been delighted that other funders have seen the value of the scheme and been prepared to pick up funding, not something which happens too often these days. For its part, the Trust has maintained its involvement by continuing two posts in a joint funding arrangement with other funders, even when the Trust's funding for the whole scheme came to an end. Moreover, the Trust intends to assist in the future establishment of small groups workers in other boroughs.

It is encouraging that there is still a clear role for trusts: to take risks, start new ventures, and assist them to grow, see them picked up by others as 'tried and tested' and to build on the experience themselves with future developments.

**Maggie Baxter**

## Summary

- The Small Groups Workers Scheme was established to assist small voluntary community organisations, most of which are not part of established networks.
- Many do not just need money but can benefit substantially from hands-on support to assist development, and build their basic organisational structures. Until the scheme was established this form of support was not being provided to any significant extent in London, not least because of other demands being made on the voluntary sector.
- Under the scheme, eight Councils for Voluntary Service (CVS) and one community centre were funded by the Trust for London, each to employ a worker for 24 hours a week for a three and a half year period, to work with small community groups in their boroughs.
- The objectives - which were achieved - were for the workers to provide appropriate support, to make training available, to help the groups get access to information, technology and technical advice, and to raise the profile of these groups within the local statutory and voluntary sector.
- The scheme meant that new, frequently quite informal and very flexible arrangements had to be made to foster mutual respect between the workers and the groups, and to ensure their independence. Much of the work had not been carried out previously because CVSs and other bodies did not have the resources or funds. Understandably they had tended to provide services according to their own perceptions of what was needed, and often because funding was only available for a particular service.
- As a result of the scheme 774 small groups received hands-on support ranging from advice on constitutions and charity registration to financial management and publicity.
- Some 1,037 individual members of these groups received formal and customised training on charity law, fund raising, finance, work plan development, and on the roles and responsibilities of management committees.
- During the three and a half years of the scheme, the workers helped small groups in the nine boroughs raise more than £800,000. This was a major achievement which will do much to ensure the sustainability of the groups concerned.
- Training was carried out either by the workers themselves or outside trainers, in some boroughs this was in collaboration with the local authorities. These partnerships have led councils and health authorities to provide a limited number of training places for small groups. Links have been made with larger voluntary organisations.
- The success of the scheme is witnessed by the ability of agencies who were still participating in the scheme in 1996, to attract funds to continue the work. In addition, small groups worker posts have since been funded in Redbridge, Barnet and Lambeth.
- The Trust for London has agreed to extend its involvement by funding four full-time workers in four other London boroughs. The long-term aim is to assist in the establishment of a small groups worker post in every London borough.



# THE SCHEME'S STRUCTURE

## ***Background***

Planning for the small groups worker scheme began in 1991 when the Trust for London approached the end of its first four years of operation. The experience of targeting small groups during these years convinced the Trust of the groups' need for infrastructure and developmental support.

The Trust's grants are targeted at small locally-based community organisations with charitable purposes. Most of the organisations receiving funding from the Trust have no staff or at best sessional or part-time staff.

Many do not have premises or any form of income when they first come to the Trust's attention. Most have been contacted by the Trust's field officers in their local area rather than having made contact directly through the relevant directories of grant-making trusts. The majority are not part of established networks and are not known to any umbrella body.

It became apparent to the Trust that the groups it funded needed more than money. Early in the Trust's own lifetime it had become clear that the necessary additional support was not being provided.

## ***Providing the funding***

The Trust for London has an annual grant-making income of about £600,000 per annum. It had always had accumulated income as a result of receiving the initial endowment of £10m over a year before the first grants were made.

It was decided that this money should now be used to contribute towards the costs of a scheme whereby workers would be employed to assist small groups, particularly black and minority ethnic organisations (including refugees), and women's organisations, which always have been priority groups for the Trust. An amount of £675,000 was budgeted for the costs of the project over a three-year period, to cover setting up costs, salaries and running costs.

## ***The pilot projects***

Discussions took place with nine councils for voluntary service (CVSs) in geographically-related boroughs and in September 1992 the first workers (each appointed for 24 hours per week) took up their posts.

Between September 1992 and January 1993, workers were appointed in Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster, Sutton, Merton, Kingston, Bexley, Lewisham and Greenwich.

The Council for Voluntary Service in Greenwich closed during 1992 and East Greenwich Community Centre became the agency which hosted the small groups worker in that borough.

The unanticipated closure of Hammersmith and Fulham Council for Voluntary Service within 18 months of the start led to the departure of the worker and the premature closure of the scheme in that borough.

## Establishing the scheme

The scheme was established with these objectives:

### **Objectives**

- to provide technical support for small groups;
- to support and make training available for small groups;
- to enable small groups to access information, technology and technical support;
- to raise the profile of small groups within the host CVSs and the local statutory and voluntary sectors.

### **The Trust's role**

The Trust maintained a close interest in the small groups worker scheme during its lifetime. Trust staff were involved in the recruitment of all the workers and attended the quarterly meetings of the three tri-borough advisory committees which maintained an overview of the working of the scheme. These advisory committees covered:

- Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, Westminster;
- Kingston, Merton, Sutton;
- Bexley, Greenwich, Lewisham

In addition the advisory committees administered the training budget provided by the Trust which was available within each of the tri-borough units for the training of small groups.

## Reporting and monitoring

In September 1992, a letter setting out the requirements of a monitoring and reporting system was sent out to each small groups worker. Each project was expected to provide information which would be fed into the monitoring of the total scheme. The reporting system consisted of a meeting of all the workers each year to discuss issues and problems and to exchange experiences, and a separate annual visit to each worker by the Trust for London's Policy and Monitoring Officer.

### **Annual reports**

In addition each worker was required to produce an annual report which included an analysis of the groups which had been helped. The report covered:

- details of the number of groups helped and the type of help given;
- details of the training provided by each worker, including the type of training, how it was delivered, and how many groups attended each training event;
- details of cross-borough co-operation: cross-borough training/initiatives with an indication of their results and any problems experienced;
- information about the impact of money brought into the borough.

### **Survey**

18 months after the start of the scheme a short

### CASE STUDY

#### Kurdish Charitable Association

##### **THE GROUP**

The Kurdish Charitable Association was registered as a charitable trust in 1990 to help provide local services to the Kurdish community in Westminster.

##### **THE PROBLEM**

The association had been unable to enlist the support of the local authority and trust funders because of the structure of the association, the stated aims and the trust deed.

##### **HELP GIVEN**

The Small Groups Project became involved with the association in 1994. As a result of the advice given, a new structure and constitution was drawn up and agreed by the management committee.

Since the involvement of the SGW, the association has received £15,000 from two trust funds. It was able to provide support for 315 people in the first six months of 1996. More recent support has been help with a proposal to the EC to provide rehabilitation help for the Kurdish community in northern Iraq.



**The Somali Community Information Centre in Westminster caters for the educational, welfare, health and recreational needs of its members. The organisation received help from the small groups worker with budgetting and preparing accounts as well as recruiting staff. Committee members attended training on their roles and responsibilities.**

questionnaire was to be completed by the managers of the host agencies and the beneficiaries as part of a survey carried out by the Trust's Policy and Monitoring Officer.

The monitoring of the scheme was complicated by the fact that there were several structural layers to the operation (laid down to ensure proper accountability). The layers included:

- the worker;
- the host agency i.e. the management of the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS);
- the Tri-borough Advisory Committee which had responsibility for the allocation of training funds and which approved the six-monthly work programme of the workers.

The monitoring process took account of these various levels. The focus was on the worker who provided the service, but the other two levels had a major effect on the project's functioning. The monitoring was carried out at both the level of individual projects and the overall operation. The latter was carried out through the Advisory Committees, whose meetings were attended by the Policy and Monitoring Officer, in order to obtain an overview of the total scheme.

# THE SCHEME IN OPERATION

## *Ways of working*

The style of work followed by the workers arose from their exclusive focus on small groups which the statutory and larger voluntary bodies by-passed. This approach required the workers to build relationships with groups to help foster mutual respect and independence.

Related to this, and of major significance, was the fact that the scheme demanded a new system of management to be put into place within CVSs. This involved a separate line management for the new workers, a separate financial accounting system, an expectation of involvement in cross-borough work, and a closer involvement with the funders than would normally be expected. For some councils of voluntary service, this was a forerunner of what local authorities were beginning to expect in terms of management structures so the experience of managing the small groups workers was a good one.

## *Identifying the needs*

The approach followed by the small groups workers meant that they had autonomy, flexibility and independence, all of which were necessary in undertaking work with new and emerging groups who were at varying stages of development and who needed to be nurtured and given direction. This type of work can require an enormous amount of time which is not normally available to other workers. The small groups workers had the flexibility to be able to experiment with different ways of working. These included visiting groups, making an assessment of the needs of the group, (a management health check) and developing an agreement to carry out specific pieces of work within an agreed timescale.

The work was based on research rather than simply upon perceived need. Training needs questionnaires were sent out by the workers to at least 200 groups in each of the participating boroughs. Right from the start the small groups workers identified seven types of groups or activities as their targets for support. These were:

## *Target groups*

- refugees
- women
- black and minority ethnic groups
- disability groups
- playschemes
- supplementary schools
- advocacy groups.

Although the approaches used varied between workers (some worked on estates, others on developing resource packs/centres, others put an emphasis on training and linking up groups with colleges and other training providers) there was a general pattern in terms of the type of support provided. This in the main consisted of intensive hand-on-support and/or training.

Some 774 small groups received support in areas ranging from advice on constitutions and charity registration to financial management and publicity. A total of 1,037 individual members

of groups received both formal and customised training on charity law, fund-raising, finance, developing work plans and on the roles and responsibilities of management committees.

### **Starting out**

At the time of the first contact with groups, the workers explained the aim of the project, namely that it was intended to help the groups help themselves.

Some workers wrote letters to the groups which laid out firm guidelines explaining how and when they would be available - although they were employed for only 24 hours each week, it was stressed that meetings could take place outside working hours. The importance of promptness and sticking to agreed timings was also stressed.

Workers made it clear they would meet just one or two representatives of any group at the initial meeting, but that all members would need to support the further development of any agreed work. Main contacts were to be provided, though workers required the names of all decision-makers, including elected management committees, so that they could contact all relevant people to ensure that the group as a whole fully backed the approaches being taken.

Groups were assured of confidentiality about the work, and that the worker would keep records of all meetings and action to be taken to ensure the work was carried out efficiently. Some were given access to these records and the right to register any dissension in the file.

**CASE STUDY**

**Activity in Merton**

**EXTENDING CHOICE GROUP**  
This organisation received assistance from the small groups worker. It is a project involving all the relevant local voluntary sector children's groups which exists to ensure that disabled children gain equal access to leisure, childcare and play services.

**SICKLE CELL SUPPORT GROUP**  
The small groups worker worked with this group to enable them to produce a report analysing a range of issues, e.g. health, education, personal support and a range of solutions to take to funders.

**CHILDREN'S RESOURCE AND INFORMATION CENTRE**  
The small groups worker is working with a number of children's groups and the local authority to make a Millennium bid for £900,000 to establish a multi-use children's centre with an interactive community information data base on services for families.

Finally it was made clear that a programme - both realistic and with achievable goals - would be agreed between the worker and the group - this would involve activities both for the worker and for the group itself as the operation should be a partnership. There would be regular reviews of the programme.

### **Range of activities**

Although the activities of the workers involved training (see below), in many cases the first

steps involved much more basic activity. By its very nature, the scheme involved groups which operated in a very informal way and either did not operate through established structures, such as constitutions or committees, or even the use of agendas for meetings. In many cases this was because they were either marginalised or very small and isolated, or new. Such structures were essential if the groups were to develop and attract funding or other types of support.

Thus the first activity in many cases involved building these structures and methods of working, through establishing

management committees, and advising on whether a legal structure such as that of a registered charity was appropriate.

Typically, the work would move on to reviewing the existing activities and procedures of groups and helping them prioritise their efforts over the next year.

Once groups had become more established, or where existing

groups were already established to this level, the opportunity arose to help the groups develop through practical advice on fund-raising whether through individual or team efforts, or through application to grant-making bodies. This involved activities such as advising how to complete application forms and how to present costings.

Many organisations were given help in establishing financial and book-keeping systems and ensuring accountability for money raised and spent.

Where staff were involved, workers also provided advice on recruitment and contracts of employment. In some cases help was given to locate suitable premises or adapt space as necessary.

In many cases workers assisted groups with evaluating and monitoring their activities and building this into future plans. Advice was given to committees on their responsibilities under charity law and recent changes, while others were advised on developing their public relations.

### **Training**

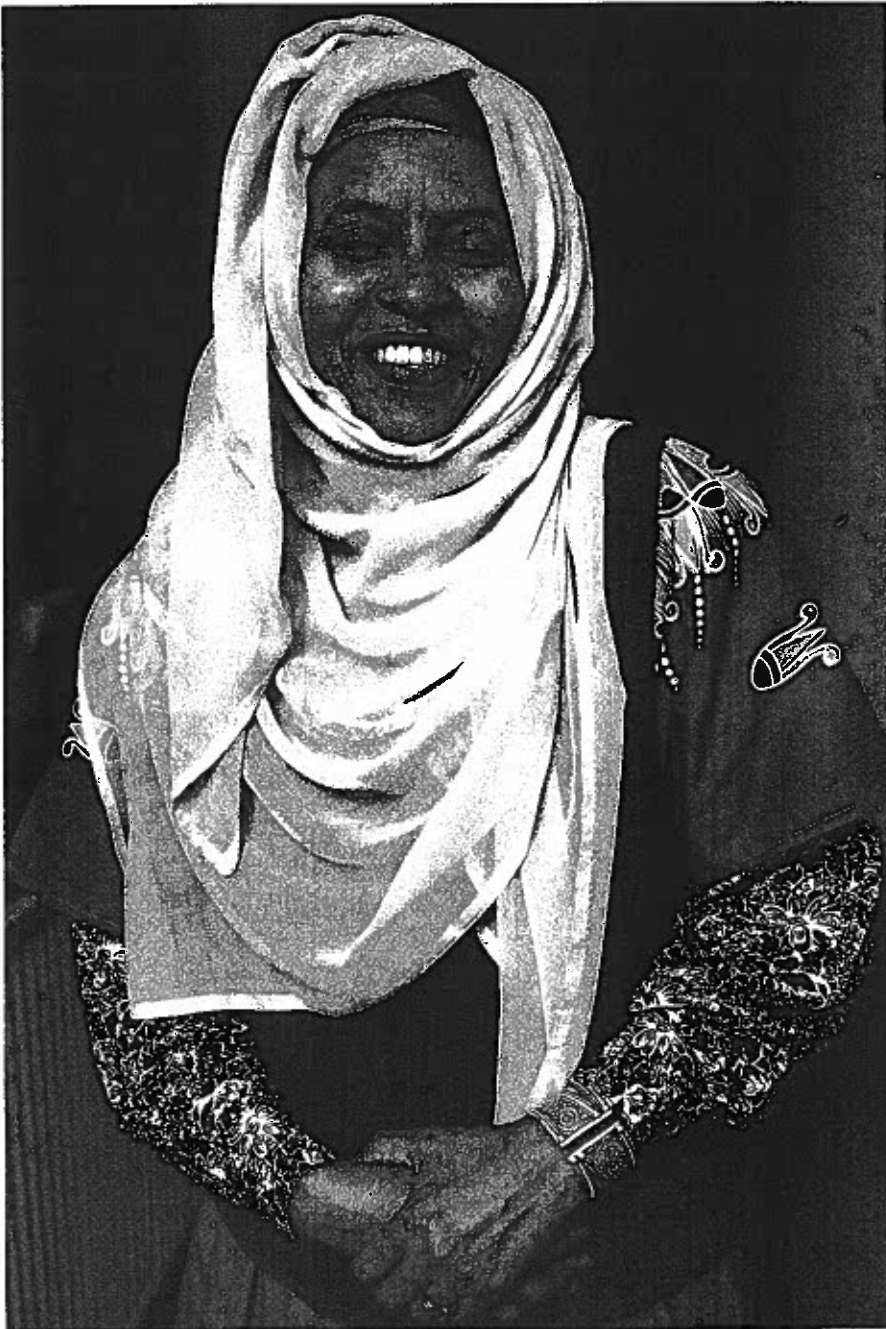
Training was conducted either by the workers themselves or by outside trainers. In some boroughs training was also carried out in collaboration with the local authorities. As a result of such partnerships, local authorities and the health authorities are now committed to providing a limited number of free training places for small groups.

The small groups workers also linked up groups with voluntary organisations who run their own in-house training. This

allowed the groups to access relevant local and low cost training. Groups valued the training they received:

*"It was appropriate. It was relevant at that time and it was tailored to our needs".*

*"The trainer was good, she met with us beforehand, she understood our needs".*



**The small groups workers assisted organisations to form their own helpful networks. In Westminster, the Somali Community Information Centre was a member of a consortium of organisations concerned with the settlement and welfare of refugees.**

The small groups workers also prepared resource packs and established resource 'centres' which strengthened the groups' capability to access information. These will continue to be of use to new and emerging organisations via the CVSs. The workers also set up forums which helped to raise the profile of small groups in the boroughs. This type of networking has strengthened groups capabilities to attract funding for their work.

The small groups have been enabled to diversify their funding base. During the past three and a half years, the small groups workers helped to raise over £800,000 for small groups in the nine participating boroughs. This was more than the budget originally allocated to the scheme. This was a major achievement which will do much to ensure the sustainability of the groups concerned.

## What the users thought

In December 1994 a user survey was carried out by the Trust's monitoring officer. This involved interviewing a sample of 30 user groups. (Details of the findings are presented in appendix 2, page 17.) The survey, which also involved discussions with managers, found training was viewed as extremely valuable, particularly where it is one-to-one, locally-based and tailored to groups' needs. Training enhanced the groups' capability to improve their management and service delivery. In fact it accounted for one third of the total support provided to groups.

Groups identified training as the single most important need they have and pointed out that there is a lack of appropriate training in the boroughs where they are located. Moreover the current training is usually too expensive and beyond the means of small groups.

The user groups stated that the training provided enabled them to do their accounts, to develop ways of monitoring their activities, to acquire a better understanding of the legal aspects of being committee members, and to set out their objectives and goals in a

## Problems small groups face

The workers became closely involved with the needs of individual small groups. Set out below are examples of the problems encountered by groups in one London borough for which the small groups worker had to find solutions:

- the most acute problem was the political priorities of the local authority. The authority favoured the long-standing and nationally recognised independent organisations and did not encourage new, small groups;
- groups had difficulty in gaining recognition as viable service providers;
- there was a lack of suitable and affordable premises for small groups;
- there was a lack of financial help;
- there was a lack of information and advice about running a voluntary group;
- there was a lack of information about services provided by the local authority and the voluntary bodies;
- groups had difficulty in meeting the high expectations and the heavy demands of service users;
- certain groups experienced problems as a result of unfamiliarity with UK institutions and local customs and practices.

more systematic and realistic way.

For many, who had never previously had money, the assistance of the small groups worker meant they were able to climb the first rung of the funding ladder.

Groups said of the scheme:

*"It gave us confidence"*

*"It taught us how to run a voluntary organisation and made us aware of our responsibilities and the rules we have to follow."*

*"It helped us to meet and discuss with other groups."*

When the user survey was carried out, discussions were also held with CVS managers to assess the effectiveness and impact of the scheme and identify any lessons learned.

The interviews indicate that the overall feeling was that the scheme had made a tremendous and valuable contribution to the groups, had influenced the way the CVSs operate, and had raised the profile of small groups in the boroughs. The following are major contributions made by the scheme:

- The small groups worker scheme brought additional resources to neglected areas of the voluntary sector. Thus needs were addressed which had hitherto been ignored.
- The scheme's work was targeted at specific groups which the CVSs had not previously reached. As a result, CVSs were now linked with groups which might have used some of their facilities on a one-off basis but about whom they knew little or nothing.
- The small groups workers introduced a new perspective based on a co-ordinated approach. This was acknowledged to be an effective way of working.
- The scheme also introduced the approach of intensive work with groups. This was something the CVSs could not previously do due to lack of time and resources.
- The small groups workers highlighted the degree to which the groups with which they worked were truly marginalised and introduced them to helpful networks as well as assisted them to form their own small groups network.
- The scheme helped small groups to access core CVS support and influenced CVSs' appreciation of the needs of small groups.
- The scheme contributed to CVS thinking in relation to their internal structures and policies. It helped them become more truly representative of the voluntary sector and some felt that it pulled them back onto the course they were originally established to follow.

**CASE STUDY**

**Queenscroft Park  
Playscheme**

**THE GROUP**  
Set up to offer after school and playscheme facilities in Eltham, south east London.

**ACTIVITIES**  
SGW involvement included advice on writing a constitution, affiliation to the Kids Club network, local publicity research, and registration with social services. Skills training was provided for the committee. Help was given with charity registration and funding applications to Greenwich Play Association and Help a London Child.



# RESOLVING PROBLEMS

Despite the undoubted success of the scheme some interesting problems did arise, connected with tri-borough activities, and with the complexities involved with management and job boundaries.

Over the lifetime of the scheme these were resolved and valuable lessons were learned for the future.

## Tri-borough activities

### *Management issues*

The terms of reference of the tri-borough advisory committees were:

- to decide on the allocation of training budgets;
- to approve the six-monthly work plans of the workers;
- to maintain an overview of the scheme across three boroughs.

Although these were agreed between the Trust for London and the councils for voluntary service before the start of the scheme, the small groups workers and the CVSs management had different interpretations of the advisory committees' roles and functions. This meant that they had different expectations.

For the workers, the advisory committees were the main forum to which they reported. Initially it was not easy for the workers to express their views freely because of the presence of the managers but their hesitation was gradually overcome.

The advisory committee also presented for management an additional layer in the management structure to which they felt they should make representations. As the committees failed to respond, frustrations arose. However, the workers found the advisory committees a useful forum for exchanging information and gaining an overview of the work being carried out elsewhere. This was provided through the Trust's staff who also attended the committee meetings.

Both the workers and some managers of the participating CVSs felt that the tri-borough committees did not impact upon CVS management committees. Few members of CVS management committees were able to attend advisory committee meetings, however, in one case a manager of a CVS pointed out that she was confused about the presence of her management committee member and did not see any reason for his presence. This was not always the case and the regular presence of management committee members in other instances was a positive contribution to the success of the scheme.

### *Co-operation and training*

Co-operation across borough boundaries proved to be unexpectedly difficult in some cases. This was where the CVSs - the host agencies - had no history of cross-borough co-operation. Some were limited by their funders i.e. local authorities, which imposed restrictions on such activities. Thus the managers did not encourage co-operation. The small groups' members themselves were reluctant to travel to other boroughs to attend training.

## CASE STUDY

## Sands End Building Co-op

**THE GROUP**

This building services co-op was set up by a group of out-of-work tradespeople.

**HELP PROVIDED**

The SGW worked with the organiser on registering Sands End as a workers co-op, and on a business plan with Hammersmith & Fulham's Economic Development Unit.

**ACHIEVEMENT**

The group aimed to get a mix of commercial work, work at low cost for people on benefit, and run a training scheme for school leavers. It was dynamic and obtained several contracts. Most trainees moved to full-time work on the strength of their involvement in the co-op.

Additionally, there were practical problems which made it difficult for the workers to undertake cross-borough work. The CVSs normal practice influenced the way small groups workers could operate. Thus the reluctance on some CVSs' part to undertake cross-borough work meant that where the small groups workers attempted joint training, there was confusion about who would undertake the administration and follow-up. Such practical problems were not satisfactorily resolved.

CVSs tended to do their own training. In some boroughs this was done jointly with local authorities. In fact during 1995 the majority of the small groups workers changed their approach to training. Instead of using outside trainers they themselves either carried out training surgeries on specific subjects for a small number of groups or only provided customised one-to-one training.

## Management: issues of boundaries and change of staff

In CVSs the arrival of small group workers had implications for other staff and in some cases no clear demarcation was made between the areas of work of the small groups workers and existing staff who had complementary tasks to fulfil. Inevitably there was scope for conflict and mechanisms for resolving conflicts did not always exist. Problems resulted but workers and managers made strenuous efforts to resolve these.

All workers received some kind of supervision but this could be irregular. Very few workers attended CVSs management committee meetings and in some cases this affected morale. There was a feeling that the issues of small groups were not always given serious attention within the organisation. The amount and quality of the interaction between CVS staff and the small groups workers differed from one CVS to another.

Some managers felt that the workers were not sufficiently integrated within the CVSs because of the existence of the

advisory committee which they saw as providing separate line management. In fact this was a misconception of the role of the committees. The introduction of this type of advisory committee was new to some CVSs who needed time to become accustomed to it. Other managers were happy and felt that this was an innovative approach.

Five out of nine workers stayed in their posts throughout the life of the scheme. One left because the CVS closed. One CVS was extremely unfortunate and had three workers in three and a half years. Another CVS replaced a worker once and one worker left by choice for another job. The staff changes undoubtedly led to disruption of the work.

The uneven flow of information from CVSs presented difficulties for the Trust. The workers themselves presented their quarterly reports on time for the advisory committee, but it was sometimes an uphill task for the Trust to get annual reports from each project.

**Groups can be isolated from sources of information and advice. Training became a vital part of the small groups worker scheme. Small organisations, such as Richmond and Kingston Accessible Transport (below) can benefit from sessions on team building, attracting and managing volunteers, disability awareness, drawing up an annual plan, fundraising and effective grant applications.**



# LOOKING AHEAD

## *The lessons*

The small groups worker scheme was a positive experience for the Trust for London, and indeed for all involved. Useful lessons have been learned, both for the Trust itself and for others considering similar ventures.

It highlighted the advantages of locally-based work where benefits are not spread too thinly; achievements can be built up and local contacts can be created and developed. It helped the Trust acquire a detailed insight into problems faced by agencies and obtain a more informed view of the standard of work carried out.

It has become clear that it takes a long time for work to be properly established and three years is not sufficient time for any future scheme to run. A commitment of at least five years in the first instance should be considered. Workers could also be employed full-time - this is what has happened in some of the projects which have continued and in new schemes which are starting. A staged exit strategy should be built into the planning from the outset. This would ensure sustainability.

An evaluation system needs to be built into the planning from the start, and all concerned parties should be made aware of its timing, process and expected outcome. In addition, projects of this type involving a trust and an umbrella organisation must ensure that consideration is given at the outset to drawing up detailed formal agreements on the obligations and duties of both sides. Though the small groups worker scheme had formal written agreements experience showed that they should have been more detailed.

What is clear is that placement of the workers in CVSs greatly enhanced the work: they have a borough-wide perspective which other agencies do not. They have access to particular resources which are beneficial to small groups, such as information on technical issues, funding sources and sources of practical support. They often have space which groups can use and they can provide access to important and helpful networks. Where in one case the closure of the CVS meant that the worker had to be placed at a community centre the work was most definitely affected: it led to a more localised approach, which while benefiting some, meant that the service could not be truly available to the whole borough.

As might be expected, the better and more secure the CVS, the better the service to small groups.

## *Extending the scheme*

The small groups worker model is now being replicated in additional boroughs in London and extended in the boroughs in which the pilot project operated:

- By the end of 1996 CVSs in three additional boroughs had appointed small groups workers.

## Key points for a successful scheme

- Schemes should operate for three to five years, with a staged exit route planned from the start
- The worker should be located within a CVS
- Workers should be employed full-time or part-time according to local need
- Clear lines of management and authority need to be established but the workers need to be allowed to operate in flexible and innovative ways
- An evaluation process needs to be built into the planning from the start and all parties concerned should be made aware of its timing, process and expected outcomes
- Where a trust is involved detailed formal agreements on the obligations and duties of both sides must be drawn up at the outset.



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**Milaap in Kingston was ready to expand and move to new premises. Help was given with writing its memorandum and articles for registration as a Company and with job descriptions, contracts of employment and all the other aspects of staff recruitment.**

- Four of the original nine CVSs which hosted a small groups worker had received money from other sources to continue the work.
- The posts in two other boroughs are funded through a fresh partnership between the local authorities and the Trust for London. This is a new development for the Trust and an indication of the importance that local government is starting to give to this type of work.
- In one borough the work of the small groups worker is being absorbed into a new CVS, currently being established.

The success of the scheme has now encouraged the Trust for London to extend its own involvement and in September 1996, approval was given for funding new schemes in four other boroughs which have an active and stable CVS.

### ***An innovative approach***

The experience of the Trust for London suggests that an innovative, flexible and focused approach is the best means of achieving the original aim of assisting small emerging groups

working with the most marginalised people to develop, and build partnerships between themselves and existing voluntary and statutory bodies. It has shown that the old style model of pump priming is still an appropriate one.

As it stands, the model is appropriate for agencies wishing to provide planned and clearly directed infrastructure support to voluntary groups.

The Trust will continue to monitor developments where it is involved in joint funding with local authorities and will draw upon the valuable experience gained from the small groups worker scheme in order to further this model of working.

## CASE STUDY

### Bexley Women's group

#### A support group for women in situations of domestic violence

#### THE GROUP

The group comprised a number of very enthusiastic women who were keen on developing a service for which there was no current provision in the borough. Their ethos was to develop support to women facing domestic violence, but not to advocate or influence the decision of any woman about one outcome or another.

#### INITIAL ACTION

An initial session facilitated by the SGW was held to codify aims and objectives, and to brainstorm on services that would be provided. Advice was given on setting agendas for the management committee, and advice on recruitment for that committee.

To prove the need for the service, it was agreed to undertake a survey of views of women in the borough; the SGW gave help in drawing up and developing a draft questionnaire and administrative assistance in printing it.

Other help included general administrative back-up including production of notepaper and photocopying facilities.

#### REVIEW

Once the group was operating, access was provided to space and the BVSC (Bexley Voluntary Service Council) mailing list for the first annual general meeting. The Small Groups Project funded a review after 12 months to assess what had been achieved and to prioritise efforts for the next year. This included a review of existing services including evaluation and monitoring.

#### FURTHER ADVICE

Further advice was provided on:

- registration as a charity
- national initiatives
- funding sources - this led to support from a number of sources including the Trust for London
- advice on fundraising locally, which was also used to involve everyone in the organisation and provided a spin-off in team building. The organisation now holds an annual event which raises £2,000. This has provided an opportunity to celebrate achievements and is a great source of motivation
- completing applications for funding
- 'packaging' projects and costing them
- contracts of employment
- managing individual volunteers and appropriate systems to involve them in the organisation
- roles and responsibilities of committee members in the light of charity law changes
- public relations.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Initially, the small groups worker was involved with the committee, though in the later stages, most help was given to staff of the project.

Through being offered this flexible resource from the very early stage of development, the organisation was able to focus its resources more efficiently and individuals were able to gain confidence in their ability to run the organisation. As a result the organisation went through a year of rapid growth and expansion of services.

As management systems were already in place, the period of change was that much easier to manage.

# Examples of SGW activity

<b>Action on Autism</b>	Organised two 'awaydays', reviewing existing services and future direction, implications and action plans. A follow-up day was planned to consider progress.
<b>Somali Caring and Education Project</b>	A Somali refugee group, mainly of single mothers. Identified needs, mainly language classes in English and Arabic, and craft based sessions. The group now has a small office and funding from a Fulham charity. Assisted with funding applications.
<b>TRADE</b>	An advice and education project working with the traveller community under Westway. Helped facilitate a review of services and a 'way forward' day. Advice to the committee on trustees duties, and on fund-raising with the co-ordinator and two committee members. Provided training to the committee as employer. Assisted in drafting equal opportunities policy, trustees handbook and terms of reference for staff and finance committee.
<b>Unity Network</b>	The SGW in association with a local authority officer organised a conference which led to the establishment of a black network of community organisations which was consequently funded by the local health authority (£25,000). They have since held health days, a black Community Care Conference and are recognised as a major consultation partner by the statutory sector.
<b>Albanian School 'Kosova'</b>	Set up by former teachers from Kosova, concerned about the educational progress of refugee children - it had gained support from a local primary school. The SGW helped set up a management group, prepared a development plan and grant application, which was successful.
<b>Somali Community Information Project</b>	A new group, help was given on setting up a management committee, agreeing a constitution, fundraising and finding premises. From providing a part-time service in the basement of the Bayswater Project, the group is now providing a full-time advice centre, a mental health project, and an outreach youth project and supplementary school. It is now hoping to set up a training and employment project with the support of CENTEC. This is one of the most successful projects supported by the SGW scheme. In 1994/95, nearly 2,000 people received support.
<b>Milaap</b>	The group has developed from a Monday lunch club to a three day a week day centre for Asian elders. Support was given to the committee to resolve difficulties such as staffing issues and premises. The staff complement has grown and services have improved dramatically. Further improvements are planned. Personal skills have been developed particularly among women.
<b>Refugee Action Kingston</b>	Support has enabled the organisation which serves a small but very diverse refugee community to develop from being entirely volunteer-led with a few family befrienders and an informal furniture distribution system to a full-time service. The City Parochial Foundation is funding a full-time project manager for 1996/97 who works with a caseworker from new offices. The next stage is for the organisation to develop to become the key referral point for all refugee support in the borough.

# Financial report

In July 1992 the Trust for London agreed a total budget for the small groups worker scheme of £675,000 equally spread over three years. At that time it was agreed that:

- the Trust would meet the costs of part-time workers, necessary secretarial support and rent for any additional premises;
- the Trust would fund related on-costs and setting up costs for each post;
- there would be a training budget of £10,000 a year for three years (for each tri-borough advisory committee).

In July 1994 it was reported that, in the three years of operation, the scheme was likely to have a total saving on its original budget of the order of £50,000, mainly due to the cessation of the scheme in one borough where the CVS had closed and a period where no workers were employed in two other boroughs. In February 1995 it was decided that the scheme should be extended up to 31 March 1996 and that the extension of the scheme to this date, could be largely financed from the savings on the original budget.

## Analysis of costs

A summary of costs against the budget is shown in the table.

The total costs of the scheme, including the period of extension, were £679,096, which is £4,096 higher than the funds allocated. Therefore, as predicted, the savings in the first three years operation of the scheme provided for the bulk of the costs of extending it.

The Westminster project was expensive largely because of high rent which was not paid elsewhere. The Hammersmith and Fulham project ran for less than half the period of the others and the costs were considerably lower.

The variation in salary costs is due both to the level of administrative support which was charged and variation in the workers' salaries. In some cases administrative support was included in the budget for running costs as a general management fee.

A budget of £6,000 per year was allocated to running costs in each participating CVS with £7,000 made available in the first year to cover setting up costs.

<b>COSTS SUMMARY</b>			
	Total Budget (3 years) £	Total costs £	Variance £
Salaries	450,000	451,758	1,758
Setting up and running costs	171,000	158,269	12,731
Advertising	10,000	8,883	1,117
Rent	10,500	12,541	2,041
Other	3,500	3,490	10
Training	30,000	44,155	14,155
<b>Total</b>	<b>675,000</b>	<b>679,096</b>	<b>4,096</b>



# User survey

This appendix is based on interviews with users carried out while the scheme was still operating.

The findings of the user survey which was carried out involving a sample of 30 user groups indicated that groups received substantial intensive hands-on support in the following areas:

- drawing up constitutions and registration with the Charity Commissioners (this accounted for 23.3 per cent of the total support received);
- setting up an office, a filing and recording system including a payroll (14.7 per cent);
- identifying the needs of management and workers; helping to meet these and helping with staff recruitment procedures (13.6 per cent);
- finding premises (4.5 per cent);
- raising the profile of organisations (including developing links with the local authority (6.8 per cent);
- setting up and developing facilities (13.6 per cent);
- producing general information and advice (12.5 per cent).

User groups found training, particularly where it is one-to-one, locally based, and tailored to their needs extremely valuable. It enhanced the groups' capability to improve its management and its service delivery.

In fact, training accounted for 33.3 per cent of the total support provided to groups. Groups identified training as the single most important need they have and pointed out that there is a lack of appropriate training in the boroughs where they are located. Moreover, the training which is available is usually too expensive and beyond the means of small groups.

Four areas accounted for a substantial part of the training received:

- book-keeping, financial management, financial control and budgeting. These accounted for 23.2 per cent of the total training provided;
- fundraising accounted for 16.2 per cent of the total training provided;
- forward planning which included project costing and management accounted for 9.3 per cent;
- roles and responsibilities of management

committees accounted for 9.3 per cent of total training provided.

User groups stated that the training provided enabled them to do their accounts, develop ways of monitoring their activities, acquire a better understanding of the legal aspects of being a committee member, and set out their objectives in a more systematic and realistic way.

There were concerns on the part of the Trust about the transfer of skills from workers to groups. Three criteria were selected to determine the success of skills transfer. The criteria were:

- the extent to which groups' confidence has been increased;
- the extent to which information could be accessed;
- the extent to which expertise was acquired by groups.

Groups that came to seek help from the small groups workers are at different stages of development. Some are established and others are new and thus needs are different and constantly changing.

Groups who were interviewed gave the following answers:

- they said they had benefited from the scheme in terms of improved access to information (42.3 per cent);
- they said their confidence to undertake the tasks which they set out to achieve had increased (30.7 per cent);
- they said they were now able to gain some expertise to implement their objectives (26.1 per cent).

Finally a substantial number of groups now feel they have been guided in the right direction (30 per cent). Many of them would now be able to access the relevant bodies directly or via the CVSS, but are keen to have some kind of reference point that they could turn to in times of need.

The message from the users suggests that it is crucial for them to consolidate their gains, and that easy access to support structures, and to cheap and local training is important.

List of  
workers and  
period  
in post

**Rosemary Henley**  
(September 1992 to March 1996)

**Charles Jordan**  
(January 1993 to December 1993)

**Tim Cowhig**  
(March 1994 to March 1996)

**Nelson De Silva**  
(November 1992 to June 1993)

**David White**  
(May 1994 to October 1994)

**Mee Ling**  
(January 1995 to March 1996)

**Aubyn Graham**  
(September 1992 to March 1996)

**Peter Smith**  
(September 1992 to March 1996)

**Matt Williams**  
(September 1992 to April 1994)

**Diane West**  
(October 1992 to March 1996)

**Giovanna Ferrugia-Forrester**  
(October 1992 to March 1996)

**Mavis Fernandez**  
(January 1993 to March 1994)

**Donald McTernan**  
(July 1994 to September 1995)

Kingston Council for Voluntary Service  
(Now Kingston Voluntary Action)

Merton Voluntary Service Council

Merton Voluntary Service Council

Sutton Centre for Voluntary Service

Sutton Centre for Voluntary Service

Sutton Centre for Voluntary Service

Voluntary Action Westminster

Notting Hill & Chelsea Social Councils

Hammersmith & Fulham Association of  
Community Organisations

Bexley Voluntary Service Council

East Greenwich Community Centre

Voluntary Action Lewisham

Voluntary Action Lewisham



