

## Resources for **small groups**

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### Developing a new project

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There are a number of reasons why a small group might want to set up a new project or take on additional work.

- Growing awareness of the needs of users and of gaps in services.
- People connected to the group may have specific skills which could be put to greater use.
- Funding may become available for a new service or piece of work.

This page aims to deal with some of the issues connected with developing new services, in particular:

- the impact a new project might have on your existing organisation and services;
- how to plan and develop a new project.

#### Looking at your existing organisation

Many groups already find themselves stretched providing their current services. It is worth considering how (or even whether), a new project could be run without overstretching the group or affecting existing services. In particular, it is worth asking yourselves:

- Does your constitution allow you to undertake this new activity?
- How will the new project be managed?
- What additional work will the new project create?
- What additional resources (money, expertise, committee time, volunteers, staff, equipment etc.) will be required to run the new project and where might these be found?
- How will the new project fit with the existing work of the group?
- Is another organisation already doing this work?
- Is the new project too big for the size of the organisation? A small group applying for a very large grant might have difficulties in attracting the required funding.

Sometimes groups are asked to run a new project by a funder or public body such as the local council. However, the decision to take up such an offer must rest with the group and if it feels it cannot manage the project properly it can sometimes be best to turn down an offer of funding.

#### Researching your new project

Having decided to set up a new project, you need to be sure that there is a need for it. Some sources of information which could be useful include:

- service users, e.g. user feedback, questionnaires etc.;
- local statistics, such as the census and other local and national surveys;

- other organisations or professionals working in your field, who may be prepared to support your idea for a new service (they may also be able to tell you whether your planned service would unnecessarily duplicate one that already exists in the area); and
- volunteers, committee members, paid staff etc. whose own knowledge and experience can be invaluable.

In some circumstances, it may be appropriate to set up a pilot project which will run for a limited period of time. This can allow you to demonstrate that there is a genuine need for a service.

### **Clarifying how the project will work**

Your group will need a clear understanding of how the project will work so that all concerned know what the project is supposed to achieve.

- Potential funders will need to know exactly what it is they are being asked to fund.
- Users will need to know what the project can do for them.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the project is only possible if you are clear about its aims

You will also need to prepare a budget setting out how much the project will cost. You must ensure that all of the costings are accurate and that there are no items missing.

### **Before setting up your new project, it helps to be clear about:**

- your group and how the new project fits with your existing services;
- other organisations and the services they provide;
- how your group will manage the new service and any increase in funding;
- how you know there is a need for your project;
- what the project will do and for whom; and
- how much the project will cost.

