

WHY START A GROUP?

Groups or individuals usually start a voluntary organisation because they have identified a gap in provision available. The organisation can be purely for the benefit of its members or have wider remit to include the general public. It would be impossible to list all types of groups—they are vast and varied eg. youth groups, older people groups, environmental groups, disability groups, etc.

IS IT POSSIBLE?

Even just thinking about starting a voluntary group, for whatever reason, you will have a fair idea about what you want to do. *But do you?*

When you get down to the nitty gritty of deciding the objectives and actions of the group it might not be that easy! It is important to set your organisation realistic goals that you can achieve—don't set your sights too high at the beginning. Make sure that you can access adequate finance to achieve what your organisation wants. Also make sure that there are enough people wanting to access the services of your group.

Naturally this will not apply to every group, it will depend on the type of group eg. A small hill-walking group will require less development planning than a local community centre. Either way it is important to consider all possibilities. It might be useful to write a brief 'business plan'. It will help you consider what your group wants to do and whether it is feasible.

GROUP CAPACITY

When starting a group there are four main issues to consider about the capacity of your organisation, basically if the group will be able to cope with the processes ahead.

1. Do you have a clear idea about what you want to achieve?

Will the group be permanent or short term to achieve a one off project?

2. What powers would you like your group to have?

Will you require charitable status? Do you want to affiliate yourself to a larger organisation? How will the Management Committee make decisions?

3. What commitment will be required of group members?

Is this level of commitment possible and can it be sustained? Will you require funding for volunteer expenses?

4. Do you have enough members?

Do your members possess the relevant skills? Is the group agreed on the aims and objectives of the organisation? Will the group work well together?

Once you have decided what type of group you are going to set up and thought about the capacity of the group it is advisable to write a constitution (resource leaflet no>).

TYPES OF GROUP

There are many different types of groups.

These include:

- * **Independent groups**—This type of group can make all its own decisions without having to refer to anyone else.
- * **Semi-independent groups**—This type of group can make a limited number of decisions and is usually controlled by a larger organisation.
- * **Recreational groups**—The main purpose of this type of group is merely to provide entertainment for its membership.
- * **Advisory Groups**—This type of group exists only to advise or report to groups or individuals.
- * **Mixed Purpose**—For example a support group which facilitates social events but also provides advice and information for those who request it.
- * **Umbrella Organisations**—ELVON is an example of an umbrella organisation that represents the interests of the voluntary sector.

HANDY HINTS

READ THE REST OF THE LEAFLETS IN THIS SERIES.

They cover:

- * Constitutions and Charitable Status
- * Organisational Structures of Charities
- * Role of Voluntary Management Committee/Board of Directors
- * Effective Meetings, Agendas and Writing Minutes
- * Health & Safety
- * Equal Opportunities
- * Staff Recruitment and Management
- * Volunteer Recruitment and Management
- * Fundraising
- * Financial Management
- * Monitoring & Evaluation

ELVON provide a comprehensive service for voluntary groups and organisations whether you have just started or have been established for years.

Do not hesitate to contact us for advice, support and information.

ELVON

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