

Box 1.M continued

Maira is aged 38 and is a white female. She wants to meet with other carers and in her own words 'to get ideas'. Maira is very new to fostering and her first placement is a 7-year-old boy who has been diagnosed as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). This seems a challenging first placement which could possibly break down. Maira has three children of her own aged between 8 and 14 years. She is also a registered childminder. Maira appears quiet, very nervous and unsure, reluctant to speak out and in need of support and advice. She leans on Molly (her sister-in-law) for some of this support.

Molly is aged 35 and is a white female. She wants to understand more about other children. Molly has been fostering for nine months, short-term and emergency placement. She recently had a placement of three siblings which broke down. Molly now fosters one 10-month-old girl. She has three children of her own aged between 3 and 14 years. Molly appears talkative, confident and 'loud', though not in an offensive way. As she is new to fostering she will gain from the support of the other carers and gain new ideas from the group.

BOX 1.0 OFFENDING AWARENESS GROUP

(Portfolios O and O1)

Main purpose of the group

To promote awareness and provoke thought and discussion surrounding issues relevant to a young person's offending behaviour.

Group leadership

Orla is a 24-year-old white woman, a graduate but not qualified professionally. She works in a Youth Offending Team, with the Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme (ISSP), a community punishment scheme which aims to reduce re-offending. Young people aged 10–17 can be sentenced by the courts to the scheme for six months. The first three months is intense (minimum of 25 hours contact each week), with a minimum of 7 hours supervision in the second three months.

Her main co-worker, **Oliver**, is a 31-year-old white male, also an ISSP worker and a newly qualified social worker. Orla has three other co-workers.

Box 1.0 continued

Group membership

Open or closed membership? *Open; young people are regularly referred by the courts, so the group may gain new members and lose them, but with the hope for some continuity of membership.*

Number of members: *varies*

Largest group attendance: *10*; Smallest attendance: *3*; Average attendance: *4–6*

Age range of group members: *14–17 years (potentially 10–18 years)*

Gender and ethnic composition: *so far, all male, though potential for young women; predominantly white reflecting the ethnic composition of the catchment area*

Voluntary or compulsory membership: *compulsory (Community Order of the court), facing breach proceedings if not valid justification for absence*

Group sessions

Where does the group meet? *Youth Offending Team premises in the town centre*

How often? *The group is on-going every Monday and Wednesday; it is expected that each young person will attend 2 sessions per week for 10 weeks (20 sessions).*

How long is each session approximately? *2 hours*

Open-ended or time-limited? *open-ended; 10-week membership for each individual*

Pen pictures of three group members

Oz is aged 15 years and is white, the first young person to be sentenced to the programme. As Oz is now onto the less intensive stage of the programme, he will only attend occasional groupwork sessions, as deemed appropriate by me and his caseworker. He completed much of the work to be covered in the group during individual sessions before the group programme was up and running. Oz is very intelligent and perceptive and can present opinions well when he feels strongly about an issue. He can be disruptive at times and attempts to dominate.

O'Connor is aged 17 and white and recently joined the programme, so will be expected to attend all sessions as he has had no prior individual work in any area. O'Connor has minor learning difficulties. To compensate for this, O'Connor sometimes takes on the role of 'entertainer'.

Owen is aged 17, white, and currently on his less intensive phase of the programme and so will attend only certain relevant sessions. Other members of the group may feel able to bully Owen, as he is generally low in confidence and not as perceptive as many of the others. Owen also struggles with concentration for any long period of time.

BOX 1.P PARENTS PLUS GROUP

(Portfolios P and P1)

Main purpose of the group

To provide a programme aimed at facilitating better communication between parents and young people aged 11–14 years.

Group leadership

Paul is Principal Social Worker, Child and Adolescence Mental Health Team. His co-worker, Petra, is a social worker with the Family Support Team. Both Paul and Petra are white, as is the membership of the group.

Group membership

Open or closed membership? closed, although new members missing only one or two sessions might attend

Number of members: 4

Largest group attendance: 4; Smallest attendance: 1; Average attendance: 2

Age range of group members: 31–47 years

Gender and ethnic composition: female, white British

Voluntary or compulsory membership: voluntary

Group sessions

Where did/does the group meet? Pathways community centre

How often? weekly

How long is each session approximately? 2 hours

Open-ended or time-limited? time-limited – 8 sessions

Pen pictures of two group members

Penny is aged 38. She was invited to join the group initially as a result of being identified as a parent on the CAMHS waiting list who may wish to join a group. Attended on the first occasion with her partner, Phil, from whom she is separated, and up to week 6 had attended every session. Phil only attended week 1, we were given to believe to support Penny. The mother of two daughters, Penny holds down a responsible job and is articulate and thoughtful. Her chosen style of parenting is based on rational negotiation. The younger of her two daughters, Petal, presented Penny with considerable difficulties. Her older daughter, Poppy, moved out to live with her father Phil. Penny was prepared to give the group a try despite not expecting to learn anything new.*

* Childhood and Adolescence Mental Health Service

Box 1.P continued

Pat is aged 39. Her son, Peter (12) had been referred to CAMHS with 'behavioural difficulties'. Pat is a single carer with an older daughter, and a younger niece living at home. The niece is subject to a Residence Order. Pat is not employed and has only recently returned to her home area and extended family, having lived in the south of England for a number of years. Her husband still lives in the south and contact with the children is an area of difficulty. From the outset, Pat has been enthusiastic about the group and has used some of the suggested approaches effectively. She can be less aware of the impact her often extended anecdotes can have on others waiting to make their contribution.

BOX 1.5 SOUND START GROUP

(Portfolio 5)

Main purpose of the group

*To provide a realistic concept of options for moving on and procedures;
To build self-confidence through opportunities to share ideas in the group;
To alleviate fears of moving on.*

Group leadership

Samantha is a Project Worker in a Leaving Care team, working with 16–21-year-olds to prepare them for independence after they leave care. She is recently qualified. Other workers in the project involved in the group are Sonia, Steve, Sally, Suzy and Shana. They are all white.

Group membership

*Open or closed membership? closed
Number of members: 6
Largest group attendance: 6; Smallest attendance: 3; Average attendance: 4
Age range of group members: 16–17 years
Gender and ethnic composition: all White British; 1 male and 5 females
Voluntary or compulsory membership: voluntary, though an expectation that all newly registered young people attend this group*

Group sessions

Where did/does the group meet? basement room of the Project Centre

Box 1.S continued

How often? *twice weekly for 6 sessions (3 weeks)*

How long is each session approximately? *2 hours*

Open-ended or time-limited? *time-limited*

Pen pictures of two group members

Stacey is a white 17-year-old. She comes to the group because she wants to and also her foster carer strongly encourages her. Stacey hoped to find out about accommodation options when she moved on. Her friend, Sharleen, attends. Stacey has attended the group even when it has had to be postponed! Stacey is seen as Sharleen's other half as they always sit together. Stacey has arrived at the group on a couple of occasions in a silent mood due to disagreements at home. Her reluctance to join in and her downcast mood confuse the group and they try to be sensitive and inclusive. Stacey has used this to become the centre of attention in quite a manipulative way.

Simon is a white 16-year-old. He is the only male in the group. He attends because he is encouraged to do so by his social worker and because he gets on well with the rest of the group. The social side of the group seems to be more important to Simon than the idea of moving on [from care to independent living]. He attends regularly and missed two sessions because he did not receive the message that it was happening. The group see Simon as very loud and boisterous. They respond positively to him, in terms of laughing at jokes when he is present, but when he is absent they talk quite negatively about how loud he is.

BOX 1.W WESTVILLE WOMEN'S GROUP

(Portfolio W)

Main purpose of the group

- a) *To offer a group experience for women who, because of their particular mental health needs, are typically not offered this type of opportunity.*
- b) *To promote self-confidence and esteem.*
- c) *To promote greater understanding of mental health issues as relating to women.*

Group leadership

Wendy is a white social worker in Westville Community Mental Health team. Her co-worker, **Win**, is a social work assistant. The team is multi-disciplinary.

(also see Box 2.3, page 36)

Box 1.W continued**Group membership**

Open or closed membership? *closed*

Number of members: *6*

Largest group attendance: *6*; Smallest attendance: *3*; Average attendance: *5*

Age range of group members: *34–58 years*

Gender and ethnic composition: *all white females*

Voluntary or compulsory membership: *voluntary*

Group sessions

Where did/does the group meet? *Westville Health Centre*

How often? *weekly for 10 sessions*

How long is each session approximately? *1.5 hours (there have been 2 half-days)*

Open-ended or time-limited? *time-limited*

Pen pictures of two group members

Wanda is a 39-year-old white woman who has a diagnosis of schizophrenia. In a group setting, she appears quiet and timid and has quite severe shaking due to side-effects of medication. Some of the other group members also remember Wanda from a number of years ago when she lived on the streets. Because of these facts, the rest of the group tend to be quite protective of her, but also to see her as 'worse than me'. In fact, when given the chance, Wanda can be very assertive. She came to the group to try something new, and was especially keen to take part in the activity days. She came to all the sessions apart from one, when she was on holiday.

Winsom is a 34-year-old white woman who was diagnosed as having a paranoid psychosis some time ago, requiring subsequent specialist support. She also sustained a head injury twelve years ago which resulted in some right-side paralysis which restricts her movement. She is fairly quiet in the group and does not give her opinion freely, although she is accepted. Winsom was curious to try out new activities and methods of dealing with mental health problems and has attended all sessions.

CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTAND

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this chapter you should:

- Understand the different elements in groups and groupwork practice
- Be aware of the range and kinds of knowledge that contribute to groupwork
- Connect groupwork practice to underpinning disciplines, such as philosophy
- Understand the range of systems which have an impact on groupwork
- Be aware of the ethical context for groupwork.

UNDERSTANDING GROUPWORK

Whether some problem situations best lend themselves to a search for solutions in a group is a matter not yet fully resolved.

Garvin *et al.*, 2004: 2

Conceptualisations of groupwork

If we take an example of a method of practice, we are likely to find that it can be used in either a group or an individual context. For example, task-centred groupwork and task-centred casework follow common task-centred principles and practice. The difference between task-centred groupwork and task-centred casework is, not unsurprisingly, the *groupwork*. We know what separates task-centred and cognitive behavioural models of

practice, but what is it that unites task-centred *groupwork* and cognitive behavioural *groupwork*? What is the groupwork that they have in common? Understanding what it is that constitutes this groupwork is very much what this book is about. When we conceptualise groupwork, therefore, there are at least two dimensions along which models must be judged; the first is the appropriateness of the *practice model* (task-centred, cognitive-behavioural, etc.) and the second is the appropriateness of the *group context*.

One notion which is central to all practice methods in whatever context is that of *purpose*. The guiding principle of purpose is evident in the social goals, remedial and reciprocal models of Papell and Rothman (1968) and in Brown's (1994) seven group types. More recently, Garvin *et al.* (2004) have suggested these possible purposes for groupwork: enhancing individual function, enriching people's lives, ameliorating problems experienced by organisations and communities, producing social change and promoting social justice. In addition to purpose, groups have also been strongly characterised by the notion of developmental sequences, such as forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning (Tuckman, 1965; Tuckman and Jensen, 1977) and Manor's (2000a) engagement, empowerment, mutuality and termination phases.

All of these models are ideal-types, and most, perhaps all, groups combine many kinds of purpose, and are not so much a series of steps and stages as a sense of emerging 'groupness', the erratic development of shared meanings and understandings. The real life of the group is much more complex than the two dimensions of any one model can suggest. Indeed, categories can create unhelpful boundaries without necessarily increasing understanding. As Garvin *et al.* (2004: 91) note, 'practice has become too eclectic to permit a neat typology of group work models'.

It is perhaps more helpful to consider the *profile* of a group, and to see this as composed of different elements (Box 2.1). Experience from the Groupwork Project (Box 1.1) suggests that the messy reality of experience is indeed best reflected not so much in discrete models or stages of groupwork, but in a consideration of these core elements. All groups embrace some of these elements, though they are found in differing degrees from group to group, each with its own unique 'fingerprint' composed of different degrees of each element (Box 2.2). So, it is not so much a question of which model to choose, but what hybrid is suggested by the particular elements of groupwork present in any one group. This gives rise not to discrete models of practice, but to complex patterns which will require much more research before we can make any definitive statements about the most effective combinations.

BOX 2.1 GROUPWORK ELEMENTS

Consultative

Facilitating group members to gain a better understanding of problems, opportunities, processes. The groupworker may be asked to work with an existing team or group to influence performance or working practices.