

Setting up a family support group



Adfam

Families, drugs and alcohol

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Setting the aims and objectives

Overall aim

This is what you see as necessary to be provided overall, in response to local needs. For example:

'To provide confidential support for family members who are concerned about someone else's actual or possible drug or alcohol use, so that they can deal with the situation confidently and constructively in their family life.'

Objectives

These are the things you will need to provide or do in order to achieve the overall aim. They are ways of addressing the needs of families, and could include:

- To provide clear information on drugs and alcohol, their effects and the risks involved in using them
- To provide information on drug and alcohol treatment
- To provide a situation where family members can talk in confidence about their fears and problems
- To provide mutual support and self-help
- To befriend, and to reduce isolation and stigma
- To develop an individual's confidence in dealing with the situation in their relationships with their family member
- To provide ways of enabling family members to reflect on and develop their family relationships so that they are in a better position to cope in a crisis.

Summary points

- 1 Work out the problems in your area
- 2 Work out what needs are underlying the problems
- 3 Set your overall aims and objectives
- 4 Prioritise your needs

Once you've set out your aims and objectives, you can start the next stage:
planning the details



FACILITATING SKILLS

Communication

Listening skills, ability to interpret non-verbal communication or body language, and the ability to say things in a way that can be easily heard and understood.

Presentation

Ability to talk clearly, to demonstrate effectively, and to present complex information by breaking it down into smaller parts and presenting it in a logical sequence.

Leading and facilitating

Being able to set up and run different kinds of activity, helping people to talk about and learn from their experiences, and keeping to the time frame.

Analytical skills

Includes the abilities to identify needs, evaluate the effectiveness of what is being presented for people and understand what is happening in the group.

Flexibility and adaptability

As much an attitude as a skill. This includes the ability to respond to what is actually happening rather than rigidly following the planned structure, whilst still keeping within the group agreement.

Motivating

Includes conveying energy, enthusiasm, interest and warmth, whilst ensuring the group work is relevant to people's needs.

Respecting and knowing about people's differences

Be aware that we are all different and that people can believe they are 'less than' others because of their imprisonment, substance use, a family member's substance use, their race or culture, their social class, their poor schooling, etc. It is important to know how these beliefs can lead someone to feel ashamed, which they may show as hostility, withdrawal or anxiety.

Knowledge of the subject

This includes being able to say when you don't know something, then asking people what they think or researching in a break and coming back with information. Remember you don't have to know it all, and that the people present have knowledge they can share too.