

Background:

Why Collective Working?

Collective working is particularly appropriate for Women's Aid groups. In our patriarchal society, power is invested in men. Women working within Women's Aid can start to redress the imbalance, both in an organisational and personal level, by learning how to use our power for the benefit of all women.

Clydebank Women's Aid was formed in 1981 by local women. From this grassroots organisation CWA became a registered charity and a service provider.

CWA adopted a collective management structure as this was seen as the most appropriate and efficient management form for our organisation and effective service delivery. This was in line with affiliation conditions for Scottish Women's Aid at that time.

Over the years there have been various, initial, concerns from funders about our management structure. These have all been resolved to funders' satisfaction when they become aware of the robust structures and procedures which operate within CWA.

Potential problems around collective management structure were intimated with the establishment of the Care Commission, now Care Inspectorate, for the monitoring of Voluntary Organisations. After negotiations, outlining the reasons for our way of working, any problems were resolved and our management structure and staff training were awarded grades which compare very favourably to hierarchies in the same field. All CWA staff are required to be trained to management level.

OSCR have no issues with our structure or financial systems.

Some WA groups within the network have now changed to hierarchies and CWA have been involved in these discussions. CWA consistently review their management structure and maintain that this is still the most efficient for our organisation. Being one of the longest serving WA groups and

Voluntary Organisations in Scotland should evidence this. Our structure has afforded us respect within the WA community, locally, nationally and internationally, and we were invited to Canada to share our positive experience of Collective Working.

Uniquely, all workers within the Collective are involved in both a strategic and operational level which facilitates identifying any gaps or issues or developments. All collective members are aware, responsible and involved in any service development and how any such development would impact on their particular area of work. Any decisions are taken by trained professionals who have an informed overview and are familiar with policies and procedures.

Financial management is the responsibility of the whole collective. Robust financial systems are in place which allows the collective to monitor overall finances. However there is a designated finance worker who provides reports to the collective. All financial systems are acceptable to funders, e.g. Scottish Government, West Dunbartonshire Council etc. Financial and progress reports are submitted to funders on a regular basis. There have never been any issues arising from these reports.

Having a link worker for various agencies is not a problem within a Collective Management structure. CWA have provided this to many agencies on request. This allows external hierarchies clear lines of communication with the Collective.

Financial implications:

All staff are employed at salary level AP5:1

This compares favourably with management and operational differentials. A comparison with a similar service shows no added financial implications for collectives.

Service Delivery:

All workers within the collective have job specific duties. However, having up to date information allows workers to cover in times of unplanned absence. It is very unusual for service to be cancelled due to workers absence. Therefore, the women, children and young people have an appropriate and consistent service.