

The Small Group Project In the High Peak

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Annual Report 2002 – 2003

**Small Group Project is a Project of
High Peak Council for Voluntary Service**



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Advisory Group Membership

Kevin Skingsley (Chair)	High Peak CVS
Sylvia Green (Retired Chair)	Glossop Volunteer Bureau
Peter Aldred	Gamesley Villa
Connie Brodie	Peak VIPs
Sue Burnage	Buxton Volunteer Bureau
Carol Evans	Peak District Rural Deprivation Forum
Julie Forshaw	Derbyshire Environmental Rural Arts
Libby Janetta	Hear Hear Club
Danny Jenkins	Heartlink
Esther Jones	One World Festival
Liz Martin	Access Buxton
Bill Purvis	High Peak Borough Council
Jim Seddon	Access Glossop

The Advisory Group is very valuable to the Small Group Project. The members are drawn from the small groups that have been supported by us. These are the people who know, first hand, the difficulties and frustrations that groups can face. We rely on them to help us to direct and develop the work. They give up their time voluntarily and we are extremely grateful to them.

Advisory Group Member Report by Carol Evans

Every year the Small Group Project grows stronger, and it reaches out to more people and enables them to reach further themselves. And what a nice, warm feeling of satisfaction it gives me. It probably makes all the members of the management committee feel good about their connection with the project, as no doubt also all the members of the small groups are pleased to be part of it. But I feel particularly smug, because I was one of the original group of people who decided, back in 1998, to respond to Comic Relief when they were considering funding a pilot rural project. Our group had been formed to look at support structures for the voluntary sector, and we were not too sure whether the possibility of Comic Relief money would take us away from our focus. After much deliberation, we decided that it would fit in with our aims and the original feasibility study could be used to back up the claim of need in the area. Off we went to London to argue the case.

From that first seed what a marvellous network of groups has grown, is growing. Sandy carefully analyses how many groups have contacted her, how many groups she is working with, all the groups that now work independently. But all that analysis doesn't really show how many lives a project like this can affect. The boost it has given to individuals to make them aware that, yes, they can do it. Those challenges can be met and now many are able to enjoy the results. That the original targets set for the project have easily been surpassed, and still the project grows, is down to Sandy's excellent work and all those who supported her at Glossop Volunteer Bureau and now at the CVS. It is also due to the commitment and work of all the members in the groups themselves who could see the possibilities and have been ready to take up the challenge. I think we all have a right to feel a little smug. Let's enjoy it - before trying to solve that next problem that's just emerging.

Chair's Report by Kevin Skingsley



This has been a year of change for the Small Group Project with Sandy relocating to the new offices of High Peak CVS. All the staff at the CVS have benefited from Sandy's knowledge of local groups and contacts, her excellent resources, detailed reports and professionalism. I would like to say a big thankyou to Sandy.

There have been new people joining the Small Groups Project Team with Andrea joining in October; she has shown excellent organisational and IT skills and has quickly become a valuable member of the team. There have also been important additions to the Small Groups Advisory Group, including, Peter Aldred from Gamesley Villa, Connie Brodie from Peak VIP's, Libby Janetta from the Hear Hear Club and Danny Jenkins from Heartlink. Thanks to all the members of the Small Groups Advisory Group, which has not only helped in defining the future direction of the project but has also ensured that High Peak CVS considers the needs of small groups in all its services.

The work of the Small Groups Project continues to meet the needs of a diverse range of groups and the challenges of our High Peak geography. There has been a very high demand for services and an impressive number of new groups created. I am pleased that groups helped in previous years are returning for more advice and support and the consistency of the work is leading to major results.

Upon a personal note, I have been particularly impressed with the excellence of the training provided by Sandy, which has enabled the Small Groups Project to meet the training needs of individual groups. In particular I would mention the recent Special Event, which was an uplifting occasion, providing the opportunity of hearing nine of the groups supported by the Small Groups Project talking about their activities.

Support Worker's Report by Andréa Lewis

I have been with the Small Group Project for a year now and I feel very much part of Sandy's team.

In the beginning my work involved dealing with correspondence, organising meetings and trying to understand all the acronyms. It was a bit like walking in a fog- but now it's all beginning to clear and I think I know where I'm going!



Part of my job is to update the files in the office, download the latest funding information and keep on top of the things as they change so quickly. I set up a small computer network that has proved to be very useful as our need to share files and information is essential.

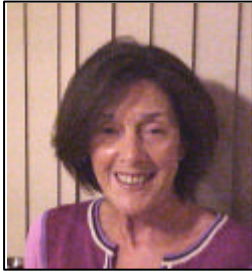
The Small Group Project's newsletter comes out every few months and this is a task I thoroughly enjoy. It is very rewarding to show off the work that Sandy does with groups in the High Peak, and for the groups themselves to have their achievements acknowledged. I also keep our exhibition boards up to date with the latest Projects.

Over the last few months I have been working with the Glossop and Hope Valley Access groups by going to their meetings and helping them with admin and publicity for their café audit project. Together we produced posters and leaflets and they are well on their way to the hard part of the project- visiting hundreds of eating establishments and collating the information to produce an Accessibility Guide to eating out in the High Peak.

Getting to know the groups on a more personal level has been the best part of the job. By attending the special events and training sessions that sandy provides for the groups, the names I write on address lists have now turned into real people.

In between all these events, we get on with the day-to-day business of supporting people in the High peak though sometimes there doesn't seem to be enough hours in the day. The Small Group Project has had a busy and an effective year due to Sandy's hard work. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with her and find it very rewarding.

Project Co-ordinator's Report by Sandy Schofield



Small Group Project's first year at the CVS

In August of last year the Small Group Project (SGP) relocated to High Peak Council for Voluntary Service. Although very sad to leave colleagues at Glossop Volunteer Bureau, I was aware that this was an exciting new phase for the SGP. As part of a CVS there is more scope for development of the Project.

One of the first tasks was to recruit a new part-time support worker. I am pleased to say that Andréa took up post in October last year. She has very quickly become a valuable asset to the SGP and brings a fresh perspective and creative approach. I, personally, appreciate her commitment to the project, her good-humour, and her 'unflappability'.

The support of other colleagues at CVS has also been much appreciated. Although everyone is extremely busy, they willingly spare the time to assist where they can and it's great to be able to draw on the different skills and knowledge of other workers. Kevin, who is my line manager, has been immensely supportive and is always enthusiastic in promoting the development of the Project.

How groups have developed

It has been particularly gratifying to see how many of the groups that we have worked with over the last four years are now extending their activities and developing projects. Many groups are working together with other voluntary organisations. Several examples can be quoted, for example:-

- The three **Access Groups** of the High Peak are all researching and producing guides to Accessible Eating Establishments. As a spin-off of the access groups, another group has been formed - '**Countryside Access**'. It will campaign for improved access to the countryside and is open to all people in the High Peak who support its aims.
- **Hear Hear Club** is facilitating deaf awareness training to service providers in the Hope Valley. Deaf and Hearing Support, which is a voluntary organisation, are providing the training; and admin support is being provided by the Rural Office Angels, a community enterprise.
- **Peak VIPs** have successfully applied for funding to purchase specialised equipment. They have also provided their members with recreational activities through HPBC sports development and one of their number has begun a campaign to draw attention to the difficulties experienced by visually impaired people caused by the new methods of paying benefits
- **High Peak Writers** have secured funding to hold a series of workshops with Allan Ogden who produces plays for radio
- **Community ACES** continues to extend the range of creative activities on offer to the residents of Earl Sterndale. It has now received funding from Local Network Fund to provide activities for the children of the village.

Work with the groups (the facts and figures)

The information we maintain on the work that SGP undertakes with the groups allows us to monitor our outputs. Below we give details of the work and the kind of groups supported over the last year. In all we have worked with **43 groups** this year.

Level of intensity of our work with groups	Nos of groups
Intensive work	14
Medium work	16
Minimal work	13
Kind of group we have worked with	
Children and babies	15
Art/ craft/ music	14
Support groups	10
Disability	8
Social	8
Campaigning	8
Youth	7
Self-help group	7
Rurally isolated	6
Community group	5
Environmental	3
Mental health	2
Learning disability	2
Sport	2
Older peoples' group	1
Other	5
Kind of work we have undertaken	
Funding	34
Project development	13
General information and advice	13
Constitutions	12
Management committee development	11
Forward planning	10
Training advice	10
Setting up groups	10
Networking and contacts	10
Researching on behalf of groups	6
Partnership development	6
Equal opps / access issues	6
Other (including health & safety; access; insurance; monitoring; publicity)	7

The number of groups receiving intensive support has steadily risen over the years. This is in accordance with our aims of supporting the most marginalized or disadvantaged groups. However, we would highlight a trend we have observed mentioned previously. This is that many of the groups who we originally helped to start up are now returning for further advice as they enter a new phase of their development. These groups then often re-enter the 'intensive' category. Also included within the 'intensive' categorisation are the groups who have benefited from one of our Mini-Trainings or Tailored Trainings (see page 9 & 10)

Feedback from the Groups

Access Glossop by **Kath Kukulowicz**

Access Glossop was launched in January 2002 to campaign for the rights of people with disabilities in Glossop and surrounding areas. The Group has been supported throughout by the Small Group Project, who have been represented at the regular meetings by Sandy. We have benefited from her advice in financial matters, ie. successfully bidding for grants, training issues, most notably in the area of auditing buildings for access, and coordinating liaison with other similar groups in Derbyshire.



The Small Group Project has also supported us in initiating a project to audit eating places for access and has provided a valuable administration resource to enable us to carry out the project with the help of Andrea to collate the information gathered and produce a guide for accessible eating places. We have been able to publicise access issues in the press with the cooperation of Tony, who is presently putting together an article on behalf of the Group.

The members of the Group have valued the input from the Small Group Project, and will continue to welcome their advice and practical support in our future activities.

Peak VIPs by **Connie Brodie**

On behalf of the Committee and Members of the High Peak VIP (Visually Impaired People) Group, Buxton, I wish to pass on our grateful thanks for all the help the Small Group Project has given to us. Your assistance in putting our group on a firm footing has been invaluable, and things have been going extremely well since our AGM which Sandy chaired in June.

The funding you helped us to obtain is much appreciated. Initially we are planning to purchase some games which we can play whenever a speaker has not been arranged to attend one of our meetings. Speakers' expenses and the costs of members' transport to and from all our functions is also paid out of the money we now have in the bank. We look forward to seeing Sandy at our next meeting and, of course, she has an open invitation to come along and join us on the last Thursday of each month if it is convenient.

Happy Days by Jean Martin

Happy Days is a new parent support group for parents of children with additional needs. Some of our parents have experienced great isolation in their situation and we wanted to provide a resource so that others would not need to feel so alone.

Sandy Schofield of the Small Group Project has been involved with our group since its first meeting in June 2003. She has assisted us in clarifying our aims, in writing our constitution, organising insurance and putting us in touch with a variety of agencies and professionals who have been able to offer advice and support. We have also benefited from training sessions organised by the Small Group Project. In addition Sandy has assisted with funding applications and we have now acquired start-up funding.

Our group has moved forward very quickly and on October 3rd we held our first parent and toddler session at the Methodist Church in Buxton. We have been very pleased with the response so far and we have great plans for the future



One of Happy Days first meetings

Gamesley Villa by Peter Aldred



Gamesley Villa in their new kit!

I would like to thank Sandy Schofield and the High Peak CVS for all their help in setting up our football club.

We had help writing our constitution and child protection policy, we have also had a mini-training session on fundraising which we have put to good use. Apart from this they have been a constant source of support whenever we have had problems or needed advice.

Innovation in Training

The Small Group Project has as its main focus disadvantaged and marginalised groups. As such they are often lacking in confidence and skills. Training was always considered to be an important aspect of the work. However, to attract members from the target groups training needs to be accessible, enjoyable and appropriate.

Much of our work can be described as training, although often not identified as such. One-to-one visits to group members address certain aspects of running a group such as taking minutes. These develop skills that can be transferred to other situations.

However, we have developed three main strands to the training the SGP offers. As with all the services the Small Group Project provides our training is completely free of charge. We can also meet other costs such as funding a crèche or a venue. The training programme has been informed by assessment of what has worked in the past. The three components are:-

- **Mini-trainings**
- **Tailored Training**
- **Annual Training Event**

‘Mini-Trainings’

Many training courses for the voluntary sector are open to representatives from lots of different groups and organisations. People who are less experienced or less confident can sometimes be left behind. Also, it is sometimes difficult to make the training relevant to the needs of the wide variety of groups who attend.

‘Mini-Trainings’ are designed to be delivered to members of just one group at a time. They are also suitable for sub-groups of two or three; or even to individuals. They can be delivered in informal settings – such as the group’s own meeting place. Each is adapted to suit the particular circumstances of the group being trained.

In all, Mini-trainings have been delivered to five groups during the year.



A creche was provided for Hadfield Centre Playgroup’s Mini-Training

Feedback from some of the Mini-training sessions....

‘...being in our group to learn and discuss about funding, so we can do it together. It feels easier that way’ ‘because the information was presented in a helpful way, it was easy to take in’

Tailored Training

A Tailored Training Event is delivered annually to at least one group. It is different in each case according to the group's needs at that particular phase of their development. During the past year we have provided two very different Tailored Training Events

High Peak Writers' Tailored Training Event

On Saturday, 12 April, SGP provided a day's session for this writing group. We have worked with High Peak Writers several times in the past. The members address issues around mental health through their creativity. The group had wanted to improve the format of their future sessions and consider ways to promote their work. They also wanted to use the day to explore ways of overcoming the stigma attached to mental health and to build confidence in their members in performing their work.

Addressing all these objectives was an ambitious brief. However, Community poet, Lisa Maud, ably facilitated the creative writing and performance workshop. By the end of the day every member of the group had produced an impressive piece of written work and performed it for the others.

With the help of Andréa of SGP the contributions were mounted on a colourful display, which was given to the members. It was hung in the Grapevine Café where the group holds its regular meetings.



High Peak Writers' Tailored Training Day

Comments on the day.....

'Enjoyable and stimulating day with good ideas for us to take the group forward'

'It helped me to get over my writers' block'

'A way to express myself about things that I try not to think about'

'Company – a complete change of routine – a nice buffet – good training opportunity – confidence building'

Summer Club Tailored Training Event

On 17th July the second of SGP's Tailored Training Event was held. This was for the **Summer Club**. The Club runs for a two-week period each summer, providing activities for disabled children, those with additional needs and with learning difficulties. It relies on the help of volunteers, many of whom are young people from the local secondary school.

Those who had helped on the project the previous year identified certain training needs. In particular, they wanted to learn about the Makaton communication system that many of the children use and also to be better able to manage the kind of behavioural issues they encounter at Summer Club. These two aspects were specifically addressed at the training.



Summer Club Tailored Training Event Workshop

The training was held at the Peak School in Chinley. Many of the children attending Summer Club also attend the Peak School. The behaviour issues training was undertaken by the Head Teacher and the Makaton training was given by one of the other Peak School teachers. The Event took place one evening after school and transport and food was provided. There were 20 participants and each received a Certificate of Attendance.

The co-ordinator of Summer Club subsequently wrote *'the young volunteers who attended the training are much more confident working with our young disabled children. I personally found the training both informative and interesting and I learnt a great deal.'*

Comments from participants in Summer Club's Tailored Training Event

'I learnt a lot about certain children's behaviour'

'enlightening'

'I will take a lot with me to put into practice'

Annual Training Event

The Annual Training Event is the highlight of the SGP's year. It gives us a chance to get together representatives of most of the groups with whom the Project has worked. This year's 'Special Event' was held at Bradbury House, Glossop on September 26th.

A lot of planning goes into making sure that everyone who wishes can participate. This includes effectively publicising the event, arranging transport for those who need it and making sure that everyone's access requirements are met. In addition to using accessible venues, we had all written materials prepared in a range of formats such as Braille and large print; hearing induction loops and two signers from RNID.

Over 50 members attended from 27 different groups.

There were presentations from several of the groups who shared with us the frustrations and the pleasures of their work. Many of those who listened to these accounts were extremely moved and inspired. One comment was *'It's just wonderful to see all these things being achieved by ordinary people'*



We also provided a range of workshops and lots of time for people to network and learn from each other. Another important aspect of the day was for members to learn more about the work of the CVS itself and to have the opportunity to tell the CVS how it can serve the needs of small groups.



Some of the comments from the 'Special Event'

*'Helped to break feeling of isolation. A chance to get to know and be known'
'Please have some more' 'Great - be back next year'
'A brilliant day. Relaxed, informative and fun - thank you'*

Finally, Sandy and Andréa would like to send our best wishes to all the small groups in the High Peak. We are looking forward to the challenges of the forthcoming year. Each group we work with teaches us something new and our admiration for their efforts, hard work and commitment grows all the time.