



Fact Sheet 8

Where and When to Meet?

Meeting venue

The meeting place is a key component of the self help group. Public libraries, churches, schools, community halls and neighbourhood centres are typically chosen meeting places. Libraries and churches are often available free of charge. Some informal groups are happy to meet in coffee shops or public parks. If, however, a free venue is not available, you will often be able to obtain a lower rate as a non-profit enterprise.

Although meeting at a group member's home or taking turns to host meetings can seem to be an attractive option, this arrangement can lead to difficulties down the track. Under these circumstances, the host could possibly be viewed as the group leader. This can undermine equality and motivation, and rotating hosts can cause some members to feel unduly pressured.

Meeting at home may also hold safety concerns for some people who are unsure about who may be coming into their home for the first time.

If a group can prove it holds Registered Charity Status, Regional Councils will sometimes provide a number of free hours per month, or charge a much lower rate for groups to meet in halls or other Council owned venues. It is worth contacting your local councillor to find out.

Public Liability Insurance

Finding a venue which holds its own Public Liability Insurance often relieves group members of the ever worrying concern of most unfunded groups – that of whether insurance cover is needed or not. This is a legal issue, and requirements may differ from State to State. Ask the proposed venue if they are covered.

When to meet

Depending on the number of group members and length of agenda items to work through, the frequency of meetings can vary. Meetings can begin as a weekly or monthly ritual, and have their regularity decreased or increased as members see fit. It is good to make these kinds of decisions democratically. How often do the group members feel they need to meet?

Transport

Transport is often an issue, so try to look for a meeting space that is accessible to public transport and free parking. Disability access is an important consideration when starting a new group.

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