

Plan and develop your organisation

Light Project International National Excellence Awards Shortlisted 2008

Background

The project first started as a result of members of the community coming together to address certain issues pertaining to the Congolese community in Islington. It started as a 'living room' project with all the activities and meetings taking place in the living rooms of members of the organisation. When the homework club, language and supplementary school had outgrown the living room scenario, it was decided to legally constitute the organisation so as to enable it to work closely with other organisations, and to provide an effective and efficient service to their members.

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The team of volunteers has until now organised their activities, made links with local mainstream schools and worked with the local authority and the CVS as their spare time allowed. As the organisation has grown, it has progressed step by step. It was constituted in 2004 and has a management committee of parents, some of whom used to be teachers; it built its constitution; became a registered charity; and wrote a Business Plan. It has been helped by the local Supplementary Schools co-ordinator, the Ethnic Minority Achievement team, and Islington Voluntary Action Council. It is now working closely with the Evelyn Oldfield unit to evaluate and improve its provision.

Challenges and solutions

Light Project International has almost outgrown the resources of its volunteers – there are many new activities they would like to start, but if the organisation is to progress further it needs to change the way it works and employ more staff. It would like to find new premises with better IT resources, and it is widening its activities, to introduce sport, and a new Family Learning project called Learning Together is Fun. Although there are good relationships with local schools, staff on both sides have little time to meet and work together.

The first step was to raise funds to appoint a part-time co-ordinator, who is consulting parents, children and stakeholders and on ways forward. He is preparing a development strategy (rather than a Business Plan, which he feels can be rather static) to take to the management committee.

He is proposing to make the organisation into a company limited by guarantee (to limit the responsibility of individuals, and attract more people to become trustees). He would also like to improve the structure of partnerships with mainstream schools, and to introduce Service Level Agreements and meetings that are clearly planned and minuted, with a stronger role for the supplementary school. The key differences in the new organisation as planned will be that it is more sustainable, more able to access funding, more efficient and effective.