

rather than at one remove. Even so, the portfolios as a whole give us a systematic insight into the group experience of over two hundred people.

The group members of the nine groups with which you will become familiar reflect a wide range of people: women with mental health problems, older people with memory difficulties, young people who have offended, adult offenders, young people leaving the care of the local authority, carers, parents of children with behavioural difficulties, disadvantaged families in a local community. They are more female and more white than the general population, which reflects the profile of the group membership overall in the Project.

I was able to contact most of the groupworkers, all of whom were delighted that their groupwork learning would be shared with a wider audience. It was never a possibility that group members could be contacted, but all group members gave permission for their own and the group's story to be told in the pages of the groupworker's portfolio. Personal details, such as names, have remained anonymous and any specific identifying features have been removed.

## INTRODUCING THE NINE GROUPS

Box 1.C	Crimestop (Portfolio C)
Box 1.F	Family Support (Portfolio F)
Box 1.H	Women of Hope (Portfolio H)
Box 1.J	Memory Joggers (Portfolio J)
Box 1.M	Managing Behaviour for Carers (Portfolio M)
Box 1.O	Offending Awareness (Portfolios O, O1)
Box 1.P	Parents Plus (Portfolios P, P1)
Box 1.S	Sound Start (Portfolio S)
Box 1.W	Westville Women (Portfolio W)

The outlines of the groups in Boxes 1.C to 1.W are taken directly from the groupworkers' portfolios. You will want to refer back to these as you read more about the groups during the course of the book.

## KEY POINTS

- This book seeks to understand the common elements of 'groupwork' in very diverse settings and contexts.
- The book is an experiment in theorising from practice, using the systematic accounts of groupworkers to help develop a generalist understanding of groupwork.
- The book is underpinned by the documented experience of a Groupwork Project to develop groupwork in a mainstream social services department in northern England.
- Nine illustrative groups are used throughout the book.
- Some academic referencing is used in the book, but the primary reference point is the evidence from practitioners, with extensive quotations from portfolios of groupwork practice.



## FURTHER READING

- Doel, M., Sawdon, C. and Morrison, D. (2002) *Learning, Practice and Assessment: signposting the portfolio*, London: Jessica Kingsley,  
This book considers the relationship between learning, practice and assessment, with especial reference to continuing professional development. It provides more detail concerning the Groupwork Project and the middle section of the book reproduces an entire Groupwork Portfolio.
- Manor, O. (ed.) (2000) *Ripples: Groupwork in Different Settings*, London: Whiting and Birch.  
A collection of articles edited by Oded Manor which, together, demonstrate the impressive range of groupwork practice.
- Marsh, P. and Doel, M. (2005) *The Task-Centred Book*, London: Routledge/Community Care.  
This book also uses practitioners' experience, as recorded in portfolios, as an evidence base for a social work practice method (in this case it is task-centred practice).

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 The text of a complete groupwork portfolio is reproduced in Doel *et al.* (2002).
- 2 Also see *The Task-Centred Book* (Marsh and Doel, 2005), which documents a parallel Task-Centred Project in the same agency as the Groupwork Project.

### BOX 1.C THE CRIMESTOP GROUP

(Portfolio C)

#### Main purpose of the group

*To enhance male offenders' capacity to change in such a way that reduces the risk of their victimising other people.*

#### Group leadership

*Claire is a Probation Officer, qualified for four years, working in the Community Supervision team of a Probation service. Claire is white and in her late twenties. Claire has three co-workers on the Crimestop programme, two men and one woman, all white.*

#### Group membership

Open or closed membership? *closed*

Number of members: *8*

Largest group attendance: *11*; Smallest attendance: *4*; Average attendance: *9*

Age range of group members: *25–56 years*



## INTRODUCE

### Box 1.C continued

Gender and ethnic composition: *all male, white British*  
Voluntary or compulsory membership: *compulsory*

### Group sessions

Where did/does the group meet? *a designated group room in the Probation Service premises*

How often? *3 mornings a week for 11 weeks*

How long is each session approximately? *2 1/2 hours, with break*

Open-ended or time-limited? *time-limited*

Any other details?

*Group members attend as a condition of a Probation Order. Failure to do so may result in a return to Court where a custodial sentence is the ultimate sanction.*

### Pen pictures of two group members

**Ceirán** is a single white man aged around 30. He is on a one-year Probation Order with a requirement inserted to complete a group. This order was imposed for offences of commercial burglary which were motivated by the desire/need to fund alcohol use. His expectations of the group were minimal. He had a discussion with a former group member who had been breached and sent to prison as a result. Ceirán had expected the same to happen to him when he was breached for failure to report to the group, but the order was allowed to continue and Ceirán went on to complete the group. He is seen by the group as lazy and uncaring. At the end of the group his attitude had shifted only slightly and I believe he would have benefited more if he had started the group in the frame of mind in which he ended it.

**Carl** is a 40-year-old white man who is single, with contact with a daughter from a previous relationship. He never lived with his partner and contact is often interrupted by acrimony between the two. He is a senior group member who has been addicted to heroin for 20 years. His offence was possession of heroin. He is mature and thoughtful. He has some insight into his offending and a degree of motivation despite many 'failures'. Carl is bemused by a lot of the material [used in the group programme], and presents almost as if joining in is 'below' him, but once he commits himself he appears to enjoy it. He says on occasion that he is beyond help, but admits that the group meets his need for company as he is isolated. He presents as physically dirty sometimes and the group 'hold him at arm's length'. However, he wins them over with his thoughtful, intelligent contribution and supportive attitude.



## BOX 1.F FIRWOOD FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP

*(Portfolio F)*

### Main purpose of the group

*To provide family support in the Firwood area, bringing families together for mutual support in a neutral and safe environment, reducing isolation and vulnerability. We aim to provide practical resources such as a toy library and a clothing exchange. Outside agencies are invited to offer advice on issues such as health, benefits, children's behaviour.*

### Group leadership

*Fran is a qualified social worker in a Children and Families team. She is dual heritage. Her co-worker, **Flora**, is a social care manager (a pre-qualified worker). Formerly there were two other co-workers: **Fiona** and **Filomena**. Fiona was the Section Head and Filomena was a qualified social worker. Fiona and Filomena have moved on. Flora and Filomena are white and Fiona is black.*

### Group membership

Open or closed membership? *open*

Number of members: *8*

Largest group attendance: *14*; Smallest attendance: *3*; Average attendance: *6*

Age range of group members: *22–42 years*

Gender and ethnic composition: *7 white females and 1 white male*

Voluntary or compulsory membership: *voluntary*

### Group sessions

Where did/does the group meet? *'The Centre', Firwood*

How often? *weekly*

How long is each session approximately? *3 hours, with lunch*

Open-ended or time-limited? *open-ended*

How long has the group been running? *18 months*

### Pen pictures of two group members

*Frank is white British and the only male to attend the group regularly. Frank is unemployed and has been since he hurt his back some years ago. I don't feel that Frank is 'intimidated' by being the only male in a predominantly female group; on the contrary, this rather encourages him in showing his 'manliness'.*



### Box 1.F (continued)

Frank criticises some individuals, including, in his manner of speaking to people, and in some respects, his non-verbal communication, and this may lead to him being quite dysfunctional with some group members. Frank also suffers from mental health problems. Unlike Fizz, who, by attending the group and finds support, this coming mainly from the group leaders, is opposed to the members.

Fizz is recently married and has two children to her previous marriage; both have been diagnosed as having Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Fizz can only be described as presenting everything as 'doom, gloom and despair'. She rarely has anything positive to say about anything or any situation and is persistently pessimistic.

All this said, Fizz is an active participant in the group and becomes involved in many of the activities that are on offer. Although quite negative about her own children, who both attend school full time, she is very good with the other group members' children and displays patience and understanding with them.

## BOX 1.H THE WOMEN OF HOPE GROUP

(Portfolio H)

### Main purpose of the group

To promote, encourage and create an opportunity for individual women suffering from depression, anxiety and panic attacks to have a better understanding of their illness; initiate positive thinking; build self-esteem and confidence; develop communication and links with the community.

### Group leadership

*Helen* is a Senior Social Work practitioner, Community Mental Health team. She is a white woman.

Her co-worker, *Harriet*, is a Community Psychiatric Nurse.

### Group membership

Open or closed membership? closed - adult women with severe and enduring mental health problems

Number of members: 7

Largest group attendance: 7; Smallest attendance: 3; Average attendance: 6

Age range of group members: 30-35 years

Gender and ethnic composition: white, female

Voluntary or compulsory membership: voluntary



## Box 1.H continued

**Group sessions**

Where did/does the group meet? *'The Clinic' at the CMHT centre*

How often? *weekly*

How long is each session approximately? *2 hours 15 minutes*

Open-ended or time-limited? *time-limited (10 sessions)*

**Pen pictures of two group members**18,057

**Hayley** is aged 48, white European. She came to the group to meet with other females who had similar difficulties. She hoped to gain confidence and to be able to meet with others like herself. She attended 7 sessions out of the 10. She was perceived as a strong member of the group, fairly self-centred, she does have a good sense of humour, she has a tendency to monopolise. Hayley is married with a grown-up son.

**Hazel** is a 48-year-old single parent, white European, with two girls aged 10 and 16 living at home with her. She has grown-up sons and a grown-up daughter by a former marriage. She is perceived by the group as a quiet person, with little interaction. She came to the group because she rarely went out due to mental and physical ill-health. Hazel felt her life was so monotonous, she felt alone and isolated, despite a supportive family. She attended six sessions.

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**BOX 1.J THE MEMORY JOGGERS GROUP**


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(Portfolio J)

**Main purpose of the group**

To provide a quality service to men and women with mild to moderate dementia whose needs are not currently met in the local area.

*Aims: to provide social contact to counter isolation; to offer stimulation to people's short- and long-term memories; to help maintain members' existing skills and learn new ones; to increase self-esteem and confidence by offering support, advice and encouragement; to help promote independence.*

**Group leadership**

*Jenny is a qualified social worker in a Community Mental Health team. Her co-worker, Jill, is also a social worker in the team, and two other groupworkers, Julie and Joy are mental health support workers.*



**Box 1.J continued****Group membership**

Open or closed membership? *open*

Number of members: *11*

Largest group attendance: *11*; Smallest attendance: *6*; Average attendance: *8*

Age range of group members: *50–80+ years*

Gender and ethnic composition: *mainly women, white, working class backgrounds*

Voluntary or compulsory membership: *voluntary (though many members may be wanting to please family members or us, the group facilitators)*

**Group sessions**

Where did/does the group meet? *At first, the James Clinic, but this closed down, so then we moved to Jonesmoor Hospital.*

How often? *weekly, Monday afternoons*

How many sessions has the group had? *15*

How long is each session approximately? *2 hours*

Open-ended or time-limited? *open-ended*

**Pen pictures of two group members**

**Jane** is in her late 70s, lives with her husband in a ground floor flat, both having moved to Cityville some months ago to be near her son. I am Jane's social worker. She has had a long-term involvement with psychiatric services, but has always been reluctant to have any form of intervention from services. Jane was hesitant about attending but agreed to visit on a trial basis 'because you will be there' and has been a regular member ever since. For the first few weeks both she and her husband forgot about the group, but now it is a regular weekly feature. She participates well in group activities, especially arts and crafts. She is very good at memory games, especially with the use of prompt cards, but finds it difficult coming to terms with her memory deficits. When she can't remember she becomes quiet and sits back. Other members may say they can't remember but Jane doesn't. She doesn't participate. Over the months she has become more relaxed and formed good bonds with the other members.

**Jim** lives in sheltered accommodation. He is 77 years old and was referred by the local community team. Jim was quite a powerful member. His mood was unpredictable, one minute clowning about, the next moody and withdrawn. He has both long- and short-term memory problems. Jim needed close supervision and he would often misinterpret situations and go off at a tangent. He had a good rapport with the group facilitators and was a popular group member. Being an ex-boxer he has a physical presence which may have been threatening; however, that wasn't the case with the group. Others viewed him as comic, he was well-liked and accepted. Two members, in particular, seemed to have a calming effect on him. For many weeks he was a regular attender, although reluctant at times, requiring friendly persuasion, he would attend sessions and leave happy. However, it reached a stage when he refused to attend and became agitated when approached. Jim no longer attends the group but is still supported by a Community Psychiatric Nurse from our team.



## BOX 1.M BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT GROUP

*(Portfolio M)*

### Main purpose of the group

*To bring together a small group of people who are or will be caring for children under the age of 8, to build on existing skills and learn tactics and strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour.*

### Group leadership

*Mandy is a white woman in her early 40s, working as a Family Worker in the Middletown Family Centre. Her co-worker, Meg, is also a white woman in her early 40s, working as a Family Worker in the Middletown Family Centre. Mandy and Meg do not have a professional qualification.*

### Group membership

Open or closed membership? *closed*

Number of members: *8*

Largest group attendance: *8*; Smallest attendance: *6*; Average attendance: *7*

Age range of group members: *29–43 years*

Gender and ethnic composition: *7 white females and 1 black female*

Voluntary or compulsory membership: *voluntary*

### Group sessions

Where did/does the group meet? *Middletown Family Centre*

How often? *7 sessions over 14 weeks (4 sessions; 5-week break; 2 sessions; 2-week break; final follow-up session)*

How long is each session approximately? *2 hours*

Open-ended or time-limited? *time-limited*

Any additional notes? *We arranged for a crèche and this was very important in enabling group members to attend.*

### Pen pictures of three group members

*Marcia is aged 43 and is a black female. She wants to gain 'as much information as possible and shared experience'. Marcia has been fostering for 8 years and has cared for 42 children on short-term placement during that time. She has teenage children of her own and is fostering a 4-month-old baby at the moment. Marcia is also a registered child minder, day carer and pre-adoptive carer. Marcia is reserved but obviously has a lot of experience and good sound advice to offer the group. She has a good sense of humour and comes over as a leader who people can look up to and respect.*