

Blockages

The four questions can also be used to help identify the root causes of 'blockages', when the group feels as if it is not getting anywhere. Whichever question *seems* to be the cause of the blockage, it may be worth going back to the previous one(s), e.g.:

The presenting problem seems to be about the *How are we going to do it?* But is there a difficulty with the 'how' because the group isn't clear enough about the 'what'? Go back to *What are we here for?* Are the Aims and Tasks of the group clear?

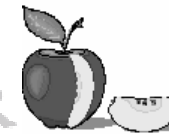
The problem seems to be about *What are we here for?* The group is confused about what it should be doing. But might this be because the members still don't know enough about each other? Go back to *Who are you?* It may be that not enough people have really said what they feel about things or what they believe, to make any decision-making about action really credible.

The problem seems to be with the *Who are you?* People just don't feel like a proper team, or that they 'gel' as a group at all. Could this be because there is still uncertainty at the individual level about being there at all? Go back to *Who am I?* And look again at everyone's fundamental reasons for being in the group.

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Wakefield Ministry Scheme



UNDERSTANDING GROUPS

A Resource Pack for Parish Teams
and Core Groups

1. Stakeholding in Groups

GR J1

What do we mean by 'stakeholding'?

Wherever people meet in a group or as members of a team, they each have a personal 'stake' in being there. This will be made up of a number of factors: their expectations of the group, their idea of what it is for, what they can contribute to it, what they hope to get out of it. The stake any particular person holds in the group or team may not be identical with the 'official' reason for their being there: they may have an agreed 'role' in the team that depends on the office they hold, the job they do or the particular expertise they have, but this may not exhaust their *personal* reasons for wanting to be part of the team.

Therefore an important factor in enabling groups and teams to develop and flourish is for the members to learn enough about each other to be honest about their motivations, hopes and aspirations, and to grow in understanding of each person's stake in the group.

Stakeholder Questions

Here are four sets of questions you could use to begin to explore this key aspect of the group's life.

Who am I? A question for each member to answer for themselves, individually:

- Who am I *here*, in this group, at this moment?
- What right do I have to be here?
- Why am I in this group? Is it the right group for me?
- What do I do to be accepted as a member?

Who are you? A question each member asks of the others:

- What do we need to know about each other in order to be able to trust each other enough to work together?

Consider the following statement: 'If no-one in the group wants to give me any information about who they are or what they are feeling, then I'm going to be very cautious about telling them anything about me and how I am feeling. There won't be much trust developed, and the group will sit and do nothing, or make petty decisions on a superficial level about things that don't matter very much.'

What are we here for? A question for the group to sort out about its Aims and Tasks:

- Are we all working on the same thing?
- Do we think it's worth doing anyway?
- Are we all committed to it, and willing to give it our backing?

How are we going to do it? A question for the group to address about being clear about process.

- Who is in charge?
- What ways are there of doing things in this group?
- How are we going to get ourselves organized?

Remember: all groups are brought together for some purpose. It may be to get a job done; it may be for creative work or play. Very often, the only *overt* concern expressed is about getting the job done as quickly as possible. But the other concerns are always there, and affect the quality of the group life and the quality of the group's product. This model of 'stakeholding' suggests that if the groups takes the time to work out its answers to the four questions, it will be more productive, ultimately more efficient, and above all, everyone will have enjoyed the work.

The back page suggests how to use these questions to get to the bottom of a lack of progress, when the group gets 'stuck'.