



Notes for support groups

Setting up a Divorce Recovery Workshop in order to help those in need is not a decision to be taken lightly and raises many questions. Below are our responses to the questions most frequently asked by individuals and organisations that have come to us in the past with the desire to help but without the necessary experience or tools to do the job. The DRW programme has been developed with the benefit of more than 30 years of experience by experts in this field.

This list is by no means exhaustive and we welcome the opportunity to discuss any queries you may have.

Who or what is DRW?

The Divorce Recovery Workshop organisation is often abbreviated to **DRW** by those associated with it. The initials are easier to use in documentation and conversation as well as being a useful disguise for anyone not comfortable using the term DIVORCE!

What is the Status of DRW as an organisation?

DRW is an officially registered Charity and is governed by the rules of the Charity Commission.

What is the aim of DRW?

To provide help to as many people as possible, across the UK, who have suffered the emotional trauma of divorce, separation or the breakdown of a significant relationship.

What is the structure of DRW organisation?

In order to meet the need across the UK local workshops have been set up with the assistance of the DRW National Committee. Although run by local volunteers these groups are part of the DRW national organisation and are overseen by the National Committee who are themselves responsible to the trustees. All local groups commit to maintaining the DRW ethos by complying with a set of fundamental principles which form part of our Charity deed.

Where can the Fundamental Principles be viewed?

The fundamental principles of DRW can be found on our web site at www.drw.org.uk. The person responsible for starting a workshop will be asked to sign an agreement binding the local group to these principles and we reserve the right to withdraw permission to run the workshop if the principles are breached.

Who are the National Committee?

The National Committee is made up of volunteers from the local groups and the appointed Trustees, all of whom have benefited from the DRW programme themselves.

Who forms the local workshop?

Anyone can apply to start a workshop in their area but it should be borne in mind that those actually running the workshop itself must have been through the breakdown of a significant relationship. Many local Divorce Recovery Workshops are set up with the help and support of local community groups, a local Church, or even the local authorities. We welcome and encourage such support, provided that it does not conflict with the group's ability to conform to our fundamental principles.

How can a supporting organisation help the local DRW group?

Typically community groups can help by:

- Providing practical help and encouragement to get the workshop started.
- Providing premises at reduced rates or even free of charge.
- Providing funding or loan for publicity and administrative costs.
- Providing volunteer staff to help with the administration.

Whilst the help and support of a sponsoring organisation is welcome, local DRW workshops remain part of DRW national organisation, independent of the supporting organisation, and must be managed with this in mind. Once established, local groups should be owned by the participants.

Is DRW a Church organisation or linked to any parent organisation?

No. It is important to recognise that Divorce Recovery Workshop is an independent, secular organisation with no allegiance to any other organisation.

How did DRW start?

The course material used for the programme was originally designed by Dr Bill Flanagan, a Christian Minister in the USA. Bill used the programme to help thousands of people. This material has since been updated and adapted for use in the UK. We are therefore confident that nothing contained in any of the DRW material conflicts with any Christian belief or conversely, could be considered offensive to anyone who does not share Bill's faith.

So who controls the local finances?

The finances must be independent of the supporting organisation. Whilst local funds are managed by the local group all funds belong to DRW. As a registered charity all income and expenses for the workshops run in our name must be accounted for to the Charities Commission. We also require one of the DRW trustees to be a signatory to the local bank account in order to allow excess funds to be recovered should the local workshop cease to operate.

Does everyone need to have been through the workshop prior to helping?

It is important for the credibility of the workshop that everyone participating in the running of the workshop itself in any way has previously experienced the trauma of divorce or the breakdown of a significant relationship and attended the workshop for themselves. Once the workshop begins it is important to be able to say to the participants *"Everyone in this room has been through a similar experience and can empathise with you"*.

Can others who are not divorced help?

Many participants have said that the deciding factor in attending the course was that everyone involved in running the workshop had been through it themselves. However there are plenty of "behind the scenes" jobs that can be done by people who do not meet this criteria – distributing publicity, dealing with

the local papers, treasurer, setting up the room and AV equipment, helping with catering and so on. Volunteers from the supporting group are welcome to do many tasks to help but must not be involved in the actual sessions.

How is DRW funded?

A registration fee of £10 per head is payable to the DRW national organisation for everyone who attends the workshop, to cover our overheads and running cost of the charity. N.B. DRW has no paid staff.

Can we use our own funds to provide the workshop for free?

No. Our experience shows that participants value the workshop more if they pay something and are more committed to completing the course.

The course does not work unless the majority of participants attend regularly as they need to be there to listen to and support each other. In paying a fee, participants confirm their conscious decision to do something for themselves and take the opportunity to improve their lives. Experience repeatedly shows that where no fee is charged, there is a high drop out rate.

What about people on low income?

There are always exceptions or concessions! We have no problem with sponsoring or subsidising those who genuinely can't afford the workshop but we ask that they pay something, however small, for the reasons given above. We recommend that any such support is presented as a "sponsorship" or "subsidy" and agreed by the local organising committee on a case by case basis. Such subsidies should, of course, be kept confidential.

Who pays the subsidy?

The local group. Any fees not collected will reduce the amount available to continue the workshop.

Does the registration fee have to be paid if someone is offered a subsidy?

Yes. The ten pound registration fee is always payable to the National account either by the participant or the local committee if a subsidised place has been offered. This must be taken into account when budgeting.

Can we limit the people attending to members of our own organisation or Church?

No. It is one of our fundamental principles that the workshop is made available to all, regardless of faith, race, creed, sexuality or any other factor. An exception may be made only for the first, internal practice workshop.

Can we limit the facilitators and organisers to members of our organisation or Church?

No. DRW is an independent, secular organisation. If restrictions are imposed as to who can help or be involved in running a workshop we cease to be independent. We could be seen as, for example, a religious organisation. It is important that we are not perceived as having any hidden agenda. Having completed a course, going on to help at future workshops is part of rebuilding peoples' self esteem and vital to the divorce recovery process for many participants. This opportunity must be available to all.

Can we use the telephone number of our organisation as the contact number?

This is not recommended. The person who answers the telephone should be someone who has themselves experienced the breakdown of a significant relationship and has attended the workshop. The empathy and understanding such a person can offer is very beneficial when dealing with a nervous and vulnerable enquirer. This cannot be guaranteed in an office where different people may answer with little sympathy and no understanding of the courage required to make that phone call.

As a Church we would like to offer a Prayer support session before or after the workshop. Is this acceptable?

A Divorce Recovery Workshop session may not include any Prayers or religious discussion, other than that expressed by a participant as part of their personal experience, for example, how they were affected by their own faith as part of the divorce experience. However, DRW recognises that for some groups being able to offer a prayer support session to those attending or helping with the workshop may be desirable. This must be offered as a separate event and not as part of the workshop. It must also be made clear that attending such a session is absolutely optional and no pressure or expectancy can be applied for anyone to attend.

Can we publish the fact that there will be Prayer support?

No mention of the optional Prayer session should be made in any publicity materials or advertisements.

Can we use Church premises for the workshop?

Yes, many DRW groups with no Church connections use Church premises; preferably those which are known as venues for community activities. Providing premises is one way the Church can support DRW.

Can we modify the course material or select only parts of the lectures?

No. The course has been carefully put together and is based on many years of experience. It must be run exactly as we provide it. It is essential that workshops bearing our name are consistent throughout the country. We are happy to consider suggestions for future inclusion or improvement of the programme.

Can a divorced couple or friends attend the same workshop?

For the ex-couple, both parties are welcome to attend the workshop but not at the same time. It would be ideal if each party attended a workshop in different areas but this is rarely possible. For friends attending the same workshop, the coordinator should ensure they are not in the same discussion group as each other.