**Starting Out – Things to Consider.**

* Do you need to do research, or has someone else already done that? Is it necessary? Why? What will you do with it? Sometimes the need is just obvious, and research takes too much time and resources. Sometimes it is enough to have some basic facts. Details can come later.
* Is there already a group that does what you are proposing – or a group that *could* do it?

Scenario: The drop-in offers services, but no formal accommodation, though one or two of the volunteers sometimes take in a destitute asylum seeker for a while. Could that be made more formal? Or could you ask those volunteers to join a new scheme that you set up? Or use their experience on your steering group?

Scenario: There are lots of destitute asylum seekers in Tinseltown. No one has actually mapped the number, but the local refugee drop-in does (or can) identify how many who attend weekly are destitute, and have been refused asylum or are waiting for mainsteam benefits after being granted leave to remain.

* There are advantages of being part of an existing organisation: it already has status, so there’s no need to write a constitution, apply for charitable status and find trustees, BUT...do they share your vision, and would they make it a priority as it would be if it was stand-alone? Which would attract more funding? Do you know and trust the board, and do they trust you? Could it be an interim arrangement?

Scenario: The Drop-In is a charity, but some of the trustees are not really involved all that much. They are all good people, but would they be happy being associated with a project that involves housing people whom the government wants to remove?

* Can the work be done by volunteers? Do you, or anyone else, have the time to coordinate it? Can you get money up-front for a coordinator?

Scenario: You need someone to vet prospective hosts and introduce destitute asylum seekers to their hosts. You work full time, so can’t always do that – but you can run the administration. You could find a local grant-making trust to fund a worker for one day a week, after you have sorted a constitution, some procedures and a small steering group. You wouldn’t need to be a charity at the outset, and once you have the safeguards in place, you can start – with volunteers or a paid worker.

* Do you need to bring anyone in from outside to help you set up? Perhaps a local organisation that helps to train voluntary groups, like a CVO or CVS, or an established NACCOM organisation.
* There are basically three options in terms of an office. It all depends on what sort of profile you need, and what you can afford.

1. Work from home: cheap but not visible. Can be a bit isolated.
2. Rent some commercial space: can be expensive, and may not be necessary.
3. Find a host organisaiton at a reduced or peppercorn rent.

Scenario: Your scheme has not become part of the Drop-In, but they are happy for someone to come to the Drop-In to speak to destitute clients and find potential guests for the hosts. They also have a small room that is available, which you can rent at a very low rate as your office.

* If you want to attract volunteers, supporters and funders, you *have to get the message out!* That means going to network meetings, pro-actively seeking places where you can share the vision, and using social media and a website to convey the message. Anyone with a vision can learn how to share it in a talk, but not everyone can do social media or produce good literature, so get someone to do that who knows what they are doing!

Scenario: You identify that your support is most likely to come from churches. You get someone to write a flyer that explains what you do, plan a brief talk, and ring round the churches where you already have connections, to book some dates. You also arrange a meeing for the Drop-In volunteers. In both cases, you ask not only for hosts but also for more contacts.