

## **Almond Place scenario: triggers for transition**

### **The work**

Tina is the sole paid employee of *Almond Place Incorporated Society (AP)*, a local project providing support services for the well-elderly in the community. AP offers twice-weekly social activities (Tea and Chat, Tuesday and Thursday afternoons) at the local Community House and a befriending service for housebound or elderly people in the community identified by other social services (GPs, Meals on Wheels, Public Health nurses).

The organisation's work is largely funded by their Opportunity Shop. This currently opens 5 days a week in the Almond Place, from 10am -4. The management committee of 6 people is elected annually.

### **The staff**

Tina, the manager, is paid for 30 hours a week, but often works more than this. All activities require the regular commitment of teams of volunteers. There are separate rosters for each of the three services: Tea and Chat, befrienders, and the Opportunity Shop. Tina has overall responsibility for keeping all these activities going and managing the 50+ volunteers who, on average, give 4-6 hours service each month. Tina is able to take advantage of some of the administrative resources in the local Community House where she has an office.

### **Today's challenge**

Today Tina has a problem with the Shop. It is school holidays. Rita, one of two women scheduled to staff the Op Shop this afternoon phoned at 9am to say her child is sick. Thelma, Rita's co-worker, is too new to work on her own. Apart from her inexperience, a recent policy decision by the Management Committee has stipulated that, for safety and training reasons, there should always be at least two people working in the shop at any one time. Ideally it would be great to have three people on duty during the school holidays, when sales are highest. Apart from actual selling, there is a lot of backroom work also needed. Many volunteers have responsibilities for child-care in the holidays. Adequate staffing is a constant headache.

Tina thinks about who she could call on to replace Rita. Several volunteers have put their name down on the Call Out roster, but none of them is experienced enough to support Thelma. Two people on the Management Committee would be suitable if they were available at short notice. If not, Tina might have to go into the shop herself.

She looks at the pile of papers on her desk. The deadline for a crucial funding application is two days away. Tina knows if she gives away her afternoon, the chances of getting it ready in time are slim.

She suddenly feels overburdened by the responsibility of holding this small agency together on her own. The Management Committee are good people, but since they appointed her to the manager position, they have largely opted out of doing work that they would have

cheerfully undertaken six months ago. Something has to change. Picking up the phone, she dials the first of her committee members. There is no reply. The second person is most apologetic but she has to visit her aged mother in the rest home.

Tina rings the shop and asks the morning shift people to close the shop when they have to go home.

**For discussion**

1. What options does Tina have in this situation? Identify the pros and cons of each option.
2. What would you do in Tina's position, and why?