



# Being a Good Chair Training

## 9<sup>th</sup> October 2012

### Training Notes

#### What's it all about?



These are notes from some training about how to be a great chairperson. The training was aimed at people with learning disabilities from North Yorkshire who:

- Are already chairs of meetings
- Thinking about chairing meetings

The training was run by Scott Cunningham from Inclusion North. These are notes of the meetings and are not minutes. This means it does not say everything that people talked about but enough for you to understand what was said.

#### Getting Started



Scott talked through the housekeeping and made sure everybody knew where things were. The group also agreed some ground rules and said that they would be talking about these throughout the session.

Everybody introduced themselves and talked about the different meetings they were involved in



## **What do we want to learn?**

The work started with everybody saying what they wanted from the session. These are the things that people said:

- How to get people to speak and not be afraid
- Speak out with confidence in front of lots of people
- Think of people's faces as sheep
- How to remember to set the rules
- Encourage people who find it hard
- How to be strong and tell people when they think they know it all (why we are here).
- Being a good time keeper
- How to keep people interested
- Make sure all the information is in easy read
- How to do good summing up
- How to keep control
- Give time for people to speak to their advocate before they respond
- How to explain big words – don't use abbreviations
- How to set a good agenda – Whose agenda is it?
- Good coordination.



Scott said we would cover this and would be a good start to learning how to be a good chair. He said a good way to do this is to go out there and do it.

## **Understanding the role of chairperson**

Before we can think about how to be the best chairperson we can be we need to understand what the role is about. People worked in groups to decide what this was. These are the things people agreed were the job of chair person.



## Before the meeting



- Set the Agenda early before the meeting
- Tell/ask at this meeting if you don't agree
- Make sure other things are not added to the agenda unless you agree to it
- Make sure the venue of the meeting is accessible
- Check the minutes and agenda have been sent out well in advance of the meeting
- Make sure the room is not too hot or too cold – because people can fall asleep
- Make sure you have good support at the meeting and know your travel arrangements.
- Information sent out in good time – easy read

## In the meeting



- Make sure everyone who wants to have their say has a chance to speak
- Only one person to speak at a time
- Tell people to use traffic lights cards
- Make sure people don't speak too fast and don't get off the subject
- Remind people of the rules
- Go over what has been said if someone misses something
- Give people enough time to speak
- Need to look to see who wants to speak
- Make sure there are lots of breaks
- Remind people not to use jargon and big words
- Timekeeping
- Make sure meeting runs smoothly and keep people happy
- Set agenda – not too much, follow, involve everyone



- Keep people relaxed,
- Plenty of breaks, refreshments
- Speakers – presentation accessible
- Co-ordinated, minutes and preparation,
- If voting ensure everyone fully understands and that it is a true account
- If something is important and needs considering put it on agenda early
- Allow time for questions
- Encourage discussions
- Treat everyone with dignity and respect
- Keep to agenda
- Be aware – people flagging, working as a team
- Minutes etc go out as soon as possible
- Feedback sheets – IMPORTANT!!

### **After a Meeting:**



- Make sure the minutes are signed off
- Action points need to be clearer
- Time for the Co-chair to discuss how the meeting went and go through feedback forms and review the meeting
- Meetings have a job to do

### **Dealing with Difficulties...**



The group worked in separate rooms. They went through some scenarios. These are small stories based on what people have said they find difficult to manage when chairing meetings. These are the scenarios and these are some of the ideas people came up with to tackle these



**Somebody at your meeting is always unhappy about things. They say that everything is rubbish and your meeting doesn't do anything. What should you do as chair person?**

- Speak to them on their own and ask what is wrong – it might not be to do with the meeting. Ask them to think of ways the meeting could be made better.



**You have a new representative at your meeting. They have been to quite a few meetings and still have not said anything. What should you do as chairperson?**

- Get to know them, go and talk to them before or after meeting at lunchtime
- Speak to the support worker



**You have been invited to speak on television about the rights of people with learning disabilities. You have been invited as the chair of your meeting. What should you do as chairperson?**

- Say yes...
- If speaking, for you or everyone
- Be prepared. What they will cover/want to know
- Discuss what you can say
- Refuse if not enough time.
- Prepare a speech – Research
- Rehearse what you will say
- Ask questions of the group. Visit other groups to find out what they are doing
- Write down things people have said
- Write down what you want to say
- Find out where to go
- Make sure you are on time
- Support worker to give you encouragement
- Write down key points you want to say



**Two people who come to your meeting can never agree and they start to have arguments all the time. What should you do as chairperson?**

- Challenge them - why are we here?
- Can we agree to disagree?
- Both got opinions, recognise where they are both coming from
- Talk to them separately/together if needed
- Ask them to go outside if they want to argue in the meeting
- Ask them to speak about this after the meeting
- If it is not about the meeting ask them to not talk about it now.

**A worker from the council keeps coming to the board to talk about some work they are doing. Whenever they come they use big words and it is never clear what they have said they will do. What should you do a chairperson?**



- Check first that it is in accessible (Plain English) form before the meeting. If not it will be 'hoyed out'.
- Encourage others at the meeting to ask if they aren't sure
- Having a chat with them, in private before or after the meeting
- Clinical Commissioning Group - Buying things for health. 'GP's buying what they need to make people healthy'
- Encourage people to say what they think it means



**People are getting stuck on one agenda item and everybody is talking at once. You have lots to get through and not much time. What should you do as chair person?**



- Say 'need to end this topic as we have other things to talk about we can extend the meeting or move on'.
- Remind of ground rules, one person talking at once. Intervene – don't allow it to happen, be firm, but polite.
- Show of hands, or move on
- Important, carry on to next meeting or Local Area Group

### **Tools for chairing meetings sheet**



Scott gave out a sheet that had some ideas about how to chair meetings in a good way. The sheet comes with these notes.

**Everybody then shared a thought about what the day and what was going on locally:**



- Terms of reference are being reviewed
- Have meetings with all Co-Chairs to discuss agendas
- Some people are shy but can do things especially in small groups
- Helped to give me some ideas for Chairing a meeting
- Chairs to remind people to check the minutes and documents and to be signed off as soon as possible after the meeting so they can be sent out to people



- Local Area Groups – co chairs to have a meeting together following on from today re agenda setting, meetings and sign off. Share your thoughts to make it better.
- Thank you to Scott and an interesting day. Have a meeting each year and bring the newcomers.
- Enjoyed the day and getting to know other people, know what other people are comfortable with.
- Very inspired, people have been really confident.
- Enjoyed the day – first time speaking up in front of everyone. Mark could support Stewart with travel
- Enjoyed it
- Enjoy it and learned some good points.