

How to be a good chairperson

Role of chairperson

Chairing is a key role on any voluntary Management Committee. The Chairperson must ensure that the Committee functions properly, that there is full participation during meetings, that all relevant matters are discussed and that effective decisions are made and carried out.

The role of a Chairperson can sometimes be time consuming, with work between meetings and external representation of the organisation. Chairing an organisation requires good diplomatic and leadership skills.

Main duties of the chairperson

- To ensure the Management Committee functions properly.

The Chairperson is responsible for making sure that each meeting is planned effectively, conducted according to the constitution and that matters are dealt with in an orderly, efficient manner. The Chairperson must make the most of all his/her committee members and “lead the team”.

- To represent the organisation as its figurehead.

The Chairperson may from time to time be called upon to represent the organisation and sometimes be its spokesperson.

Characteristics of a good chairperson

A good chairperson will ideally:

- be sensitive to the feelings of members
- be impartial and objective
- start and finish on time
- be approachable
- have an understanding of the voluntary/community sector
- be tactful
- have knowledge of the organisation’s key networks be able to delegate
- show interest in all members’ viewpoints
- have sound knowledge of the organisation’s work
- have an ability to respect confidences
- ensure decisions are taken and recorded

Some DO's and DON'Ts for a good chairperson

DO

- Make all members feel valued
- Strive for consensus, using his/her casting vote sparingly
- Plan for the future
- Encourage new faces onto committee
- Listen to others
- Make new members feel welcome
- Allow others to take responsibility
- Keep calm
- Know when to stand down

DON'T

- Be the person who talks most at the meetings
- Allow meetings to become unproductive
- Allow one or two people to dominate meetings
- Cut people out of discussions
- Make all the decisions
- Make people feel foolish or useless
- Force people to contribute to discussions
- Lose his/her temper
- Stay too long