

Holding Effective Meetings

Groups/committee should meet regularly, usually once per month, to discuss relevant group business. These meetings should be held at a time and place convenient to the majority of committee members and to the leader and staff members.

These monthly meetings provide all those involved an opportunity to voice their opinions, ideas and any concerns they may have. It is important that all committee members should feel able to participate in the discussions and the decision-making. It is also important that there are structures in place to enable staff/leader attendance at regular management meetings and that structures are in place to consult with staff.

Sample Agenda for monthly Committee Meeting

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Apologies | (Secretary) |
| 2. Minutes of the last meeting | (Secretary) |
| 3. Matters arising | (Chairperson) |
| 4. Correspondence | (Secretary) |
| 5. Financial report | (Treasurer) |
| 6. Staff planning report | (Staff Manager, Group Leader) |
| 7. Main business | (Chairperson) |
| 8. AOB-Any other Business | (Any member) |
| 9. Date of next meeting | (Chairperson) |

Monthly meeting format:

- 1.** Chairperson declares the meeting open. It is not a legal meeting otherwise. He/She receives apologies for absence(s), introduces and welcome guests or new members.
- 2.** Secretary reads minutes of the last meeting ; The minutes are a record of the proceedings and decisions of the previous meeting. If minutes are in order, they are proposed, seconded and then signed by the Chairperson. If not in order, they are amended, before being proposed and seconded for adoption and the Chairperson signs them. They are now a legal account of the last meeting.
- 3.** Matters arising from minutes- bring members up to date on items not coming up under main business of the meeting.
- 4. Correspondence and matters arising from correspondence:** Synopsised and read by secretary. Discussion on relevant items and decisions taken.
- 5.** Each decision taken needs to be proposed and seconded and recorded by secretary.
- 6. Financial Report:** The treasurer should attend each monthly meeting with an up-to-date bank balance, plus a breakdown of income and expenditure since the previous meeting-including any outstanding payments or bills - figures must be minuted.
- 7. Staff planning report** - The Playgroup/Crèche Leader should report to the committee on progress since the last meeting, and on the curriculum planning prepared by the staff for the next month, together with any training issues .

8. Managers/Leaders/Staff Report this procedure will enable communication on the day to day running of the service between the staff and the committee, the leader may also make a request for particular resources to facilitate curriculum planning, or for the replacement, maintenance or repair of equipment. It is good practice if the staff planning report is in a written format so that it may be added to the minutes and should be submitted to the committee two days prior to the meeting. There should also be a report on the petty cash used by the staff, and any cases of fees arrears (without naming particular families). It is recommended that all Playgroup/Crèche Leaders use an account booklet to record all income and expenditure.

9. Main Business-This section will vary from meeting to meeting, but will usually involve discussion on fundraising events, Any decision made must be minuted.

10. AOB (Any Other Business)- There may be issues from time to time which will be discussed under this heading and which can be added to the agenda by any member of the committee or staff. It is good practice to inform the chairperson in advance if possible.

11. Date of the Next meeting- Chairperson closes the meeting and sets date for following meeting. It is advisable to set the date of the next meeting in advance so that all those present can make a note of it. The secretary should also remind the committee members in writing of meetings a week before they are to take place.

Minutes inform members what decisions have been made

- Ensure that decisions are agreed as a whole
- What was decided and by whom proposed and seconded
- What action was to be taken
- By when action was to be taken
- Record of events/actions

Rules of an Effective Meetings

- Ensure meetings start and finish on time
- Set Agenda
- Minutes read from last meeting
- Is there good attendance?
- Does everyone participate and feel involved?
- Is the atmosphere lively, constructive, open and friendly?
- Are decisions well made after sufficient discussion?
- Are tasks distributed equally?
- Are decisions followed up?
- Do people leave with a feeling of satisfaction?

Remember:

- Is each meeting needed? (Less often or more often)
- Are the appropriate people attending the meetings?
- Are the appropriate issues being dealt with at the meeting?
- Are the issues better dealt with outside the meeting, (example –by setting up a sub-group)
- Listen to each other- allow one person to speak at a time, listen and respect others opinions
- No Pressure- Each member has the right not to speak
- Encourage others to speak –Give each member the opportunity to speak, if they wish to do so before you make a comment

- Respect people's confidences- it is important to respect people's trust and therefore not to talk to anyone else about what you have heard in the group if confidential
- Volunteer yourself only. Do not press others to volunteer, do so yourself or pass if you are unable to make that commitment
- Stick to the task at hand. Do not introduce items/subjects that are not relevant to the meeting

Gather information

Give all information and facts relevant to the issue:

- who will be affected by this decision
- who should be consulted
- what are the financial/practical/organisational issues

Express view/opinions, suggested solutions

- Express opinions and feelings about the issue
- Encourage people to express their opinion and their feelings about what is being discussed.
- Look at differences of opinion as helpful rather than a hindrance

Evaluate Solutions

- Bring together all suggested solutions or courses of action. It can be helpful to write the points on a flipchart when it is a complex issue, particularly when people are considering different proposals.
- Working on decisions in small groups and then giving feedback to the large group is also a way of enabling each person to have their say and to help the group to be clear. It is helpful for the chairperson to draw attention to points of agreement and to encourage people to build on these.

Making the Decision

Consider and discuss the solutions, including possible consequences of any of the solutions.

- Consider all options
- Choose the one you all agree is best for your group
- Is it practical
- Can you afford it

Decision Agreed

- Chairperson makes it clear what has been agreed
- Vote or consensus reached
- Record in minutes, proposed and seconded

Consider and confirm who will implement/action the decision

- Who will action decision?
- When by?
- When will he/she report back to the committee/meeting