

# Chairing Skills

## A one-day training course

### About the course

If you ask ‘*what makes a good meeting?*’, the first thing many people say is: ‘A good Chairperson!’

In any group or organisation, you need meetings if you want to get things done – and meetings don’t work unless someone takes responsibility for managing them.



*“Very informative,  
well-run, enjoyed  
every minute”*

*Sheila Perry*

*“The trainer was well  
prepared,  
knowledgeable and  
very professional. I  
can’t believe where a  
whole day’s gone.  
GREAT!”*

*Emma Robins*

In community groups, the people who wind up chairing meetings are often good community *leaders* but not necessarily effective chair-people. A good chairperson is someone who *facilitates* rather than controls, who brings out the best in other people and helps groups to reach the best possible decisions.

**This course helps participants learn the key principles, skills and techniques needed to be an effective chairperson** – whether you are chairing local community meetings, more formal committees, or management boards. It is useful both for aspiring or new chairs and for those who have been doing it for years and want to up their game. The first part of the course gives participants a clear framework and a big tool-box of chairing skills. Then, in the second part of the course, everyone gets a chance to practise some chairing – in a friendly, supportive setting.

Many people who have taken part in this course say that the skills they learn are vital not just for their residents’, community or housing meetings, but for many aspects of their personal, social or working lives. In other words, these are great ‘skills for life’.

### What participants will gain from the course:

- ✓ An understanding of the chairperson’s role and responsibilities inside and outside of meetings
- ✓ Awareness of the key qualities, skills and knowledge needed
- ✓ The organisational factors that must be in place if meetings are to be effective – including a code of conduct, effective agendas and minutes, and recognition of individual needs
- ✓ The best way to arrange a room for a meeting

- ✓ The 6 key communication skills needed to chair meetings
- ✓ How to build a sense of rapport and trust in a group
- ✓ What's involved in opening and closing meetings
- ✓ How to manage a discussion so as to bring out the best in everyone there
- ✓ How to bring in and engage quieter people
- ✓ 4 types of question that are essential for chairing and when to use each
- ✓ The best shape for a discussion, and how to steer it from open exploration to closed decision-making
- ✓ The process of arriving at a shared, consensual decision – and the role of the chairperson as enabler and arbiter
- ✓ The 5 different types of decision which any group will take
- ✓ How to manage decisions when there are strong differences of opinion
- ✓ How to deal with difficult, challenging behaviour – including how to calm people down when discussion becomes over-heated
- ✓ Recognition of different approaches to chairing, and the importance of using your own personality and strengths
- ✓ An opportunity to practise and observe chairing, and to give and receive helpful feedback.

### **Course Programme: Outline**

#### **Session 1 - Organising meetings for success**

- The roles and responsibilities of a chairperson
- Key qualities, skills and knowledge needed
- Getting the organisational basics right
- How to use agendas and minutes as a chairperson

#### **Session 2 – Practical tools and techniques**

- Managing communication in a meeting
- The process of steering a discussion
- Using appropriate questions
- Managing decision-making in a meeting
- Dealing with difficult behaviour

#### **Session 3 – Putting it into practice**

- Practising chairing (in groups of 6 to 8), with observation and feedback

#### **Session 4 – Putting it into practice (cont.)**

- Group-work (continued)
- Action: what will we do differently in future?
- Review of the course