

Running Effective Meetings & Dealing with Disagreement

A one-day training course



About the course

Meetings aren't easy. To be effective, they need to have clear aims, be well planned and organised, be chaired sensitively and conducted skilfully.

*"Very informative,
well-run, enjoyed
every minute"*

Sheila Perry

*"All the course
content was useful
and relevant. Gave
all participants an
opportunity to
understand how
their behaviour can
affect the success of
the group."*

Jane McKalroy

If meetings are to be open to genuine discussion, creative thinking and new ideas, disagreement is inevitable. The challenge is to allow for a healthy exchange of views without descending into unnecessary conflict.

In residents committees and community groups, we need meetings in order to share information, reach clear decisions and thereby influence services. The people taking part in these meetings are mostly volunteers, hopefully from a range of backgrounds and with differing experiences. It is important that we learn to work together in ways that are friendly, respectful, and productive.

This course helps participants share and develop skills for running excellent meetings, for managing the inevitable disagreement, and for tackling unhelpful conflict.

What participants will gain from the course:

- ✓ An overview of what makes a successful meeting
- ✓ How to plan and organise a meeting for maximum effectiveness
- ✓ An understanding of the key factors that can help or hinder meetings
- ✓ How to create effective agendas and meeting plans
- ✓ How to produce minutes that impact positively on meetings
- ✓ What we can and can't expect of a chairperson
- ✓ The importance of recognising people's differing needs
- ✓ An understanding of the key communication skills that are useful for effective meetings
- ✓ An opportunity to practise careful listening
- ✓ How to get your points across skilfully in a meeting

- ✓ 4 types of question that are particularly useful, and when to employ them
- ✓ The best shape for a discussion, and how to move from open exploration to joint decision-making
- ✓ How to manage decision-making when there are strong differences of opinion – and the process of arriving at a decision that everyone can support
- ✓ The key behaviours that have been shown to be particularly helpful and unhelpful in meetings
- ✓ How to disagree without personalising the issues
- ✓ An understanding of the ways conflict can emerge and spiral in meetings
- ✓ An opportunity to identify ‘hot’ topics in the group / committee
- ✓ How we experience conflict at an emotional level: the fight or flight response
- ✓ How to tackle difficult issues in a meeting without the discussion getting out of control
- ✓ Managing ourselves and others in emotionally charged situations – how to calm things down
- ✓ An opportunity to decide ways of improving your meetings in future.

1- Day Course Programme: Outline¹

10.00-11.15 - **Organising meetings for success**

What do we expect from a meeting?

How do our own meetings measure up?

Getting the organisational basics right – ground-rules, agendas, minutes, chairing, recognising individual needs

11.30-12.45 - **Communication in meetings**

The key communication skills needed in meetings

Listening, speaking and checking understanding

Using questions effectively and managing debate

Reaching the best possible decisions

1.30-2.45 - **Holding positive discussions**

Getting your points across in a meeting

Challenging one another assertively

How conflict can develop and how to manage it

3.00-4.15 - **Putting it into practice**

Practising some of the skills and techniques covered

Action: what will we do differently in future?

Review of the course

¹ Please note: the timings are suggestions only and can be adapted