

Overview

Scouting Ireland recognises the importance of encouraging and promoting effective working relationships between all members of the Association. From time to time, the relationship between some members may become strained and lead to a situation where some intervention is required to resolve any conflicts, disputes or differences and to restore confidence and trust. Conflict can be a positive thing if handled properly or it can lead to discord and disputes if not.

Relevance to you

As Group Leader, you have a key role in ensuring that conflict is properly handled and that positive outcomes result from it. Our policy and guidelines set out how this should be done. The guidelines include approaches and strategies which can help resolve conflict and some tips on how best to approach this. You should make yourself familiar with the policy and guidelines so as to be able to draw on them if the time comes.

Unresolved conflict can sometimes lead to a complaint, when this happens you should refer to the Complaints Procedure for guidance on how to proceed.

There are 3 very important steps to be successful in managing conflict.

Step 1 - Strengthen your self-awareness and self-control; this is the only variable you can absolutely control yourself. You need to desensitise yourself, go through what you think could happen and prepare yourself mentally for different reactions. Make sure you are clear on your own boundaries and limitations and keep it in perspective.

Step 2 - Learn how to handle your own anger. Consider what is behind your anger, fear, disappointment, confusion or frustration. Own and admit to your anger, know the threat; sometimes uncertainty is the real threat, talk to someone.

Step 3 - Learn to confront anger in others. People tend to be more rigid about their position/perception in a conflict situation so you need to abandon the need to be logical. Don't be afraid to state how you feel, ignore abuse and be persistently reasonable. Listen carefully, this takes time and effort but will prove essential. Avoid escalation of the situation.

You won't always be able to avoid a conflict situation but it is very important that you prepare yourself in advance of meeting the people in question.

Find out exactly what is being disputed from both sides. Ask about required outcomes and possible compromises. Don't let yourself get side-lined by other issues which may come up.

Once agreement has been reached ensure that both sides fully understand the joint position on the issues being adopted, how each person will act accordingly to comply with this position and how it will be dealt with if one of the participants fails to act appropriately and as agreed. The agreement should include some provision for a future meeting to check that both sides are satisfied with how well the agreement is working and how things can be improved if necessary.

Useful documents and publications

SID 19.04 - Conflict Resolution Policy

SID19a.12 - Conflict Resolution Guidelines

SID 97.13 - Complaints Procedure

Where to get help

You should keep your County Commissioner and Support Staff appraised about any significant conflict situations and any complaints that arise. They will have a broad view across situations in all of the Scout Groups in the Scout County and should be able to provide you with advice and support as you proceed.

The County Commissioner may call on the National Adult Resource Committee (NARC) if they feel it is needed. NARC maintains a panel of people who are specifically trained in mediation and conflict resolution techniques.