

# The Secretary's role

This information sheet gives a quick overview of the main roles of officers, and a more detailed explanation of the role of the secretary.

The Chair is responsible for the smooth and fair running of the organisation. Their main job is to chair the meetings of the organisation.

The Treasurer has overall responsibility for the organisation's finances. Their main job is keeping financial records.

The Secretary is responsible for keeping people informed about the organisation's activities. Their main job is taking minutes of meetings.

This information sheet looks at the main jobs a Secretary usually does. There are separate information sheets on *Setting the Agenda*, *Chairing a meeting* and *The Treasurer's Role*.

## What does the Secretary do?

The exact work of the Secretary will vary from organisation to organisation. It is worth having a discussion in your group to agree what the responsibilities of all the Management Committee members should be.

This list can be used as a guide to the Secretary's job:

- ♦ Taking minutes in meetings.
- ♦ Keeping files of past minutes and reports.
- ♦ Letting people know when and where the next meeting is and what it is about.
- ♦ Helping to prepare agendas for meetings with the Chairperson.
- ♦ Writing and receiving letters on behalf of the group.
- ♦ Keeping members informed of what correspondence has been sent out and received.
- ♦ Keeping a record of membership.
- ♦ Keeping a record of important phone numbers.

How you organise this work is up to your group to decide. You may want to divide the jobs up amongst a number of people. You could have a minutes secretary, a correspondence secretary, and a membership secretary.

Or you may want to have a Secretary and Chairperson who work closely together, and share some of these tasks.

It just depends on the size of your group, the amount of time people have available, the skills people have, and what people like doing.

# Taking minutes

Taking minutes is an important part of the job, and can be a bit daunting when you first start.

The basic tasks for the minute-taker are:

- ♦ Taking rough notes during your meetings.
- ♦ Writing up these notes neatly or typing them out.
- ♦ Copying and distributing them to relevant people.
- ♦ Keeping all minutes together in a file for future reference.

You may find it useful to look at our separate information sheet on *Taking Minutes*.

## Tips on being a good secretary

### Organisation

- ♦ File things! This is very important – you need to be able to find papers and reports quickly and easily. Get a stack of cheap cardboard folders and label them. Have a separate file for every important issue.
- ♦ File things quickly. Don't let huge mounds of papers you haven't looked at build up. If you sort them out regularly it is a small and manageable job.
- ♦ Have a 'to do' list or notebook. It helps to have everything you need to do written down in one place. Don't rely on your memory.
- ♦ Get a book to record correspondence the group receives.
- ♦ Get a diary to record dates of future meetings.

### Share information

- ♦ Make sure information that comes to you gets passed on, or publicised more widely. Often things for a group are sent to the Secretary and never get any further.
- ♦ Work closely with other Committee members, particularly the Chair.

### Don't take on everything

- ♦ A common complaint from Secretaries is that they end up doing everything. Be clear with your Committee about what tasks you will do.
- ♦ If you start to feel over-burdened, talk about it with your Committee, and see if jobs can be shared out more.