

Youth at the Table

What skills do I need to be great at governance?



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The British Youth Council (BYC) believes that young people should be involved in decisions that affect their lives, and participate in wider society and civic life. It is this belief that underpins BYC's work to support and encourage the involvement of children and young people at all levels of an organisation, from its decision-making processes to its operational activities.

It is this belief which was behind the creation of BYC's Youth at the Table training, which aims to support children and young people's involvement in organisational governance, i.e. decision-making. The Youth at the Table training course consists of a collection of training exercises that will both help young people to get involved in governance and help those who are already involved. We have also developed a series of four resource booklets covering a broad range of things that you need to know. These are:

- ***What is governance?***
- ***The essential information you need to know about governance***
- ***What skills do I need to be great at governance?***
- ***How do I get involved in governance?***

The resource booklet ***What skills do I need to be great at governance?*** contains a series of help and advice around important skills that you may need to be involved in governance and decision-making. The advice contained within this booklet will help you to achieve the levels of competence that are outlined in the National Occupational Standards for Trustees and Management Committee Members.

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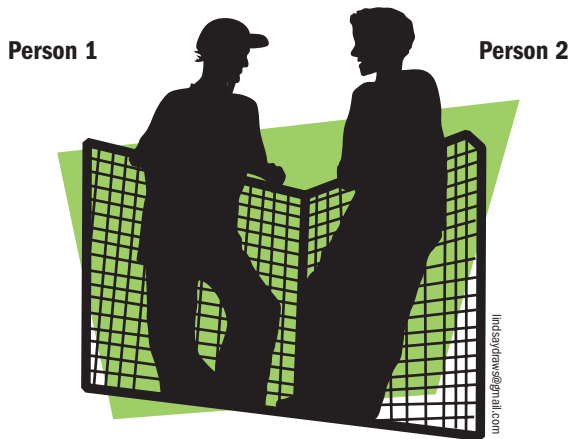
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Listening Skills

How to listen

Participating in organisational decision-making will mean that it is very important that you can effectively listen to the concerns and perspectives of other people so that you can make appropriate decisions. Listening is an active communication skill that demands energy and know how. To listen effectively, you must hear and select information from whoever is speaking, give it meaning, decide how we feel about it and respond – all this happens in a manner of seconds. We must also understand the speaker's purpose, which influences the way we listen and how we perceive what is being said. The speaker and listener must have the same purpose for the communication to be effective.

The listening process



The diagram above shows the listening process in action, where Person 1 is in a conversation with Person 2 and listening to what they are saying. The listening process has four stages:

- **Stage 1** Hear the message
- **Stage 2** Interpret the message
- **Stage 3** Evaluate the message
- **Stage 4** Respond to the message

Each stage of the process is explained in more detail opposite.

Stage 1: Hear the message

Our brain recognises sound as it enters the ear. Other 'listening channels' such as our eyes and our senses seek confirmation of the message from the speaker's non-verbal body language and tone of voice. Hearing is the beginning of the listening process. It is non-selective and involuntary. However, we make a choice to listen.

When the messages we hear are interesting or important we pay attention to them. However, we can hear what we want or expect to hear and filter out that which does not interest us at that point in time or is not consistent with our feelings and attitudes.

The key elements to hearing the message are:

- Paying attention
- Identifying what parts, of what is being said, is important

Stage 2: Accurately interpret the speaker's message

Interpreting a speaker's message means coming to a mutual understanding of what the person speaking means. Listeners often experience problems interpreting because no two people see things in the same way. Speakers do not always say exactly what they mean or mean exactly what they say.

For example:

- 'When I look at your face, time stops still'
- 'You have a face that would stop a clock'

Key elements to interpreting a message are:

- Having a desire to understand
- Asking for clarification or more information

Stage 3: Evaluate the message

When listening to others, it is important to make sure that you have all the key information before forming an opinion. Avoid jumping to conclusions based on a personal bias or incomplete information. A good listener will weigh up and analyse all the evidence before reaching a final decision.

Key elements to evaluating the message are:

- Asking questions, to make sure you fully understand what the speaker is saying
- Analyse the evidence
- Not jumping to conclusions straight away

Stage 4: Respond to the message

The listener must let the speaker know what was heard and how it was heard. This means that listeners are required to provide feedback to the speaker to complete the communication process. This feedback lets the person speaking know that what they have said was heard, understood and evaluated properly.

Aids to effective listening

There are a number of practical things that you can do to develop or improve your listening skills such as:

- Take notes, this shows that you are listening and reacting to what someone is saying to you
- Use appropriate non-verbal body language, such as nodding or smiling
- Asking questions if you are unsure of what is being said and giving feedback to aid concentration

Presentation skills

At some point you will need to be able to present your views and opinions to other people. It is an important skill to be able to put your point (or that of other children and young people) across in a number of different settings. This could be at a meeting or giving a talk at an event. The following section will highlight some skills which will help you to improve the way you present things either in meetings or perhaps when representing the organisation.

Use your whole body

When giving a presentation, people are not just listening to the words you say, they are also looking at what your body is saying. What you do with your body can sometimes be more memorable and meaningful than what you actually say.

You should ensure that you use your whole body, your voice, arms and legs. This is called body language. However, the main part of your presentation is your voice; ways to use your whole body when giving a presentation include;

- Talk slowly and clearly
- Emphasis key words
- Use your hands to express points and emotions
- Stand or sit upright and facing your audience
- Look at your audience – have eye contact (if you're not that confident to look people in the eye then look at the wall at the back of the room and it can have the same effect)
- Try to limit filler words such as um, or uh

It's important not to overdo your use of body language so try to avoid

- Constantly waving your arms about
- Walking or pacing from side to side
- Taping or shaking your arm or leg
- Making unpleasant face gestures

Content and structure

It is important that you think carefully about what you are going to say. Think about the subject you are talking about and who you will be talking to, e.g. will it be other children and young people, adults, etc.

Regardless of who you will be presenting to, it is important that your presentation has a structure. Structure your presentation using the boxes below.

Beginning

Middle

End

The easiest way to do this is to start your presentation by telling the people what you are going to talk about (the beginning), then talk to them about the subject (the middle) and then give a summary of what you have just talked about (the end).

Overcoming nerves

Everyone gets nervous when they have to speak in front of other people, regardless of how many people they are speaking to or the setting in which they are speaking. Some suggestions of ways to beat your nerves include:

- Preparing beforehand
- Finding a friendly face in the audience
- Sitting next to someone you know
- Taking deep breaths before you start
- Having slides/photos if you go blank

Talk don't read

Remember that people want to hear what you have to say; they don't want to see how well you read. Having notes will help you but it is important that you don't stand up and read directly from them. To start with it means you won't be looking at your audience and you'll be speaking to the floor! But also this will affect your confidence and your voice may go quieter the longer you read and people will not be able to hear you.

Practicing before hand will help, especially if you are giving your presentation to an audience. Ask your friends and family if you can run through your talk with them; even ask them to attend your event so you can have at least one friendly face in crowd.

If no one will let you practice your talk with them, practice in front of a mirror as this will prepare you to look ahead while talking, rather than looking to the ground.

Remember remember

It may seem like a lot to take in, but remembering the points below should help you when giving a talk or presentation.

- Think confidently - Ask yourself whether the messages you are sending out reinforces or contradicts the image that you want people to have of you. If you want to be seen as confident, recognise how you communicate non-verbally and use it positively.
- Eye contact - Make and maintain eye contact as it helps to come across more confidently. Remember not to stare but to look away or around the room every so often.
- Stick to time - It is important not to overrun your talk. If you have to talk for 5 minutes, try and make sure you don't go over that time – practising your talk before hand will help.
- Adopt the right facial expression - Adopt an expression to suit what you're saying will reinforce your presentation.
- Watch tone, pitch and volume - Lower your tone to sound more authoritative and don't speak too quickly. Speaking too loudly makes you sound aggressive, but speaking too quietly makes you appear unsure of what you are saying.
- Watch your hand signals - Be aware of what you are doing, a wagging finger can seem aggressive; excessive movement of the hand may express nervousness.
- Stand straight walk tall - Hunched shoulders and a slouched posture give the impression that you are nervous and unsure of yourself.
- Look good to feel good - Find a style that makes you look and feel good. Also think about the clothes you will be wearing, as it is important to dress appropriately.

Being Confident

You may sometimes find that you are in a situation in which you don't feel very comfortable or confident, this could be due to lack of experience or because you are in new surroundings. The following guide is to help you improve your confidence when it comes to communicating with other people.

Saying yes and no

Learning to say yes and no appropriately, and with care to both yourself and the person you are talking to, is a powerful tool in assertive and confident behaviour.

Knowing which one you want to say is also important. You can often be confused about situations, and may say yes when you mean no; or say no, when you mean yes. The ability to say yes or no, when you mean it, is a clear way of showing your confidence to others and your belief in yourself.

Believe in yourself

Believe that you can't make a mistake – you can only do things in a way that seems most appropriate given all of the information and experience that you have at the time. Think about it, if you thought that there was a better way of doing something then you would have done it.

Don't give up trying to become more confident, even if you do not succeed at the start. Each situation is different, and every time is a new chance to get it right.

Positive not negative

You make choices all of the time. It's easy to set a trend of having a hard day every day, by always using the same language. Try and change the following:

Negative	Positive
I've had a terrible day	The day has been tough but I've learnt a lot
It's an uphill struggle	I'm nearly there/halfway there
I'm finding it so hard	It's not as easy

'I' statements

If you want to get a message to someone clearly, you need to consider how they receive your message. All too often when people have something difficult to say, they change or alter words so that it appears that difficulty is coming from elsewhere i.e. that someone else is to blame.

Start your sentences with 'me', or 'I', to overcome this problem. By owning your thoughts and feelings, you will come across (and appear) more confident. Personalising your statements means that they can not be as easily disregarded and ignored.

From 'should' to 'could'

Confidence is based on the choices that you make, what things you decide you should and could do and why. Many people, however, believe that there are too many things that they should do, and this lack of choice prevents them from becoming more assertive. If you were asked to write a list of all the things that you should do, its reasonable to assume that there would be at least a dozen things on it.

But think again – what do you HAVE TO DO on the list? How many of those things have come from other people? How many of them are what others told you that you should do?

Now turn the list upside down. Write it out again listing only the things that you would do because you want to do them. How many are left? Why are the others not there? Well why should you do them?

Changing 'know' into 'imagine'

Try to avoid making assumptions about others and their thoughts, feelings, needs and wants. Changing the words 'I know...' to 'I imagine...' can have a tremendous impact on a situation because you are making clear what is fact and what is fantasy.

It is also important not to force your ideas onto others, which can sometimes happen when we use the words 'I know'. It then takes either very assertive behaviour to get out of these situations.

Turn questions into statements

Try using statements that are based on a question, e.g. 'don't you think that...' but try to avoid using them all the time so that you don't have to say what you think. Use positive statements that start with 'I feel' or

'I think' so that others are clear about where you stand. This can be useful in decision-making processes as it encourages others to think around the thing that is being discussed.

Positive images

A good way of putting the positive thoughts and attitudes into your life is to create images and statements for yourself. Think about things that you would like to become and write them down in a way that suggests that you are already here, e.g. I am happy with my life. If you have some crayons, colour them and make them special to you. Then stick them around the place where you live in places where you will often see them, and say them out loud to yourself whenever you see them. Do this frequently and slowly, and you will feel the difference in yourself.

Useful words

The following words are helpful in making you feel more confident, regardless of the method you use to communicate to people

- I am confident that/in
- I believe that
- In my view/opinion

It's important to avoid using negative words to start with, even if you are unsure of something. It's better to start with a positive statement, followed by a negative statement, e.g. "I think that this may be the right way, but then again I haven't been down this road before."

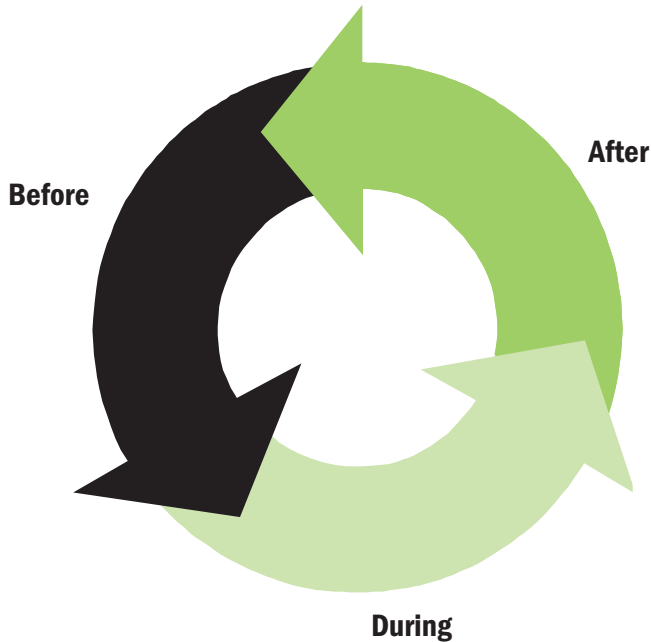
Attending Meetings

One of the main forms of involvement you will have in decision-making will be through attending meetings. It is likely that you will need to attend and participate in a range of different meetings and this guide is designed to help you get the most out of any meetings that you attend.

Meeting Cycle

All meetings follow the same pattern or cycle. There are things that need to be done before, during and after a meeting.

Each stage of the cycle is important, and is far easier if the stage before is properly done. As the cycle shows, a good meeting involves far more time beforehand than the meeting itself will take.



Before the Meeting

The key things to do before a meeting are:

- Decide on a date, time and venue
- Inform others of when and where the meeting will take place
- Draw up an agenda (see below)
- Prepare any documents and send them out to those attending
- Read the minutes from the last meeting

While most of the tasks listed above are quite easy, drawing up an agenda for a meeting can take some time. An agenda lets everyone know what is going to be discussed at a meeting. A good agenda not only lists the items for discussion, but also includes a short explanation of each item.

Sample Agenda

- Date, time and place of the meeting
- Apologies for absence
- Minutes of last meeting – to agree for accuracy
- Matters arising (something following on from last meeting) – to receive an update on the progress of decisions agreed at the last meeting
- AGM – to discuss Board members' thoughts on the upcoming AGM and their thought on policy proposals
- Finance – The treasure is to provide an update on the state of the organisation finances.
- Any other business – this is for items not already on the agenda either as a separate item
- Date, time and place of the next meeting

The person leading the meeting, (typically the Chair) is responsible for putting the agenda together. Their role is to ask those attending the meeting what items they would like to discuss and decide the order in which they will be discussed.

The Chair usually does this in partnership with the person who is responsible for producing a record of the meeting, the Secretary.

During the Meeting

The Chair will introduce each item on the agenda, ask for comments from everyone else and should sum up any discussions before the meeting is asked to make a decision on an item (that's of course if an item needs a decision to be made).

It is important to follow the meeting and not have your own private meeting with one or more other people. If you have something to say, try to get the Chair's attention by raising your hand.

It is polite to turn off your mobile phone during the meeting, and also not to interrupt others when they are speaking. If you disagree with a point that someone has made, be sure not to attack the person but provide reasons why you believe their suggestion may not be the best way forward by providing alternative suggestions.

When making any comments, make sure they are relevant, i.e. don't start talking about the financial statements when the meeting is checking the accuracy of the minutes from the last meeting!

It is a good idea to make notes during the meeting. This can help you report back on the meeting to another group, whilst you're waiting for the minutes. At all meetings, someone will be responsible for producing a formal record of the meeting (minutes); that is the role of the Secretary.

After the Meeting

A record of the meeting, minutes, should be produced and sent to everyone who attended the meeting, as soon as possible after the meeting. This should usually be done no more than two-weeks after the meeting.

If any decisions were made in a meeting, the outcome will be recorded as an action for either an individual or group to do something. When you receive the minutes, check to see if you have any action points against your name. If you do, you will be asked for an update (in matters arising) at the next meeting.

If you have attended a meeting on someone else's behalf, you will need to give them a report of what happened at the meeting.

Roles

Most meetings will have two main roles, that of a Chair and Secretary. For some meetings these may change from meeting to meeting, but with other more formal meetings, the same person will carry out the role at each meeting.

The main duties of each role are:

The Chair:

- Plans and runs meetings
- Ensures everything on the agenda is covered and decisions made when required, keeps order, helps the group with differences of opinion and conflict and makes sure everyone gets to speak.

The Vice Chair:

- Will deputise or stand in for the chair if they are unable to make the meeting for any reason

The Secretary:

- Helps the Chair plan meetings, ensuring notice of meetings is given, agendas are drawn up and the agenda is sent out in advance so that members receive all necessary information
- The secretary must ensure that an organisation operates within the legal context and abides by the governing document of an organisation
- Takes and sends out the minutes
- It is important to note that this is not to be confused with the company secretary who some organisation will have as a staff member, usually with responsibility for administrative duties

Chairing a meeting

Sometimes, a person with a big more experience will be asked to chair a meeting. This is only something that you might have to do if you felt comfortable and confident in doing it.

The Chair's role

The Chair of any meeting is responsible for ensuring that everyone attending that meeting is provided with the opportunity to have their say, ensure that the agenda is followed, and that the meeting is calm and constructive.

Similar to the meeting cycle, there are three stages within a meeting that are important for the Chair.

Opening the Meeting

- Greet members and thank for them attending, welcoming and introducing any new members or guests.
- Ensure that the meeting starts and ends on time; make sure that everyone has a copy the agenda for the meeting.
- Ensure that the meeting follows the agenda (ask if anyone has any other business to add to the agenda at this stage)

During the Meeting

- Encourage everyone to participate in discussions, without putting them on the spot or embarrassing them.
- Set ground rules at the start – e.g. all members are entitled to their views and should be listened to respectfully and not interrupted.
- Keep the meeting focused by bringing people's attention back to the issues at hand, don't let it become a discussion of people's personal interests or style
- Ensure that work is distributed evenly amongst members, and people should only agree to do what they can reasonably do.
- Summarise regularly, especially before a vote or when a lot of people are contributing to the debate. You should regularly summarise what has been said, clarifying people's viewpoints and reiterating what decisions have been made.

After the Meeting

- Evaluate the meeting with other members to identify any problems that may have occurred and brainstorm ways in which improvements can be made.

- Follow up on what was agreed during the meeting:
- Ensure members understand and carry out their responsibilities.
- Check up on delegated tasks (but don't be too strict about it!)
- Give recognition and appreciation to members for excellent progress.
- Put unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting (work with the meeting's Secretary on this).

Practical steps

Whilst it may seem like a lot to take in, by following the steps listed below you will be able to chair a meeting,

- Make sure you have enough space!
- Arrange your papers on the table in front of you so that you can see the paper(s) at a glance and have the full (or hidden) agenda within easy grasp.
- Don't let your mind wander and always make sure you know exactly what is happening.
- Look around the room as much as possible to make sure nobody who wants to speak is missed out.
- Listen to each of the speeches and be prepared to interrupt speakers if they are saying anything that is inappropriate.
- If you have to tell anyone to finish speaking, try to do it as nicely as possible!
- When someone has finished speaking, always say 'thank you'.
- After a vote, make sure you announce it firmly - carried or defeated.
- Be firm but fair.

Impartial not uninterested

As Chair your role will be to encourage rather than to lead discussions. If there are any agenda items that you feel passionately about, which you would like to influence, then you should step down from the Chair for that agenda item and ask the Vice Chair to oversee the discussion of that item.

Chairing a meeting is not about imposing your view on others, but encouraging others to comment on a proposal, draw together people's contributions, and inform the meeting of the options open to them.

Overall, as Chair of a meeting, you are there to:

- Introduce the meeting and each agenda item
- Encourage discussion amongst members
- Summarise the discussion and available options
- Announce the meeting's decision on an item

Dealing with Conflict

Sometimes, you may find yourself having to face situations that involve conflict with other people. You, the other person or both of you, may feel angry and frustrated but it is important that you have the ability to deal with and overcome this conflict.

A few Golden Rules

The important thing is to try to improve the situation. Neither of you will benefit in the long term if this continues. There are several things that you may want to think about doing when conflict does arise.

- Meet with the other person - Even though you might be tempted to moan or talk about the issue to other people, you need to refrain from involving others and talk to this person directly. They can't change their behaviour if they do not know it bothers you. Make time and space for this to happen, ideally somewhere comfortable and neutral.
- Clarify the purpose of the meeting - Make sure that you are both aware of why you are meeting, i.e. to resolve the difficulty. This may help to start thinking of a possible resolution to the conflict.
- Clearly state what the problem is - Be clear about why you are angry or upset.
- Don't allocate blame, work at moving on - If the other person finds this difficult, encourage them to move forward, which is what you would like to do. Very few people when asked if they want to carry on with the conflict will say "yes".
- Stick to the subject and take one issue at a time - Issues will be missed if they are all raised at the same time.
- Use feedback - Always talk about the other person's behaviour not their character, do not make it personal. For example, "when you arrive late to meetings, it means that I cannot do ..." rather than "you are useless with time". Also mention the way that the behaviour makes you feel.
- Reach agreement on future action - This will help in resolving any future conflicts that may arise, as you will have an agreed and established way of moving forward.

Developing Plans

You may find yourself in situations where you have to plan various things; this could, for example, be a plan of action on a particular issue or a broader strategy for an organisation. Regardless of how big or small the thing that you are planning is, planning it will follow the same general pattern – and include some common pitfalls!

Have a clear aims and objectives

It is essential that you know what you plan to do (aim) and what you hope to achieve (objectives). This will help you decide how you will go about making your plans happen. It can be helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

- What do you want your plans to achieve – will it raise the profile of your organisation? Will it make the organisation more effective?
- Who else will be involved with the plans that you are making? Will it require you to co-ordinate with people from other organisations or members of the public?

To make effective plans you will need to think carefully about the kinds of objectives that you set. One way of doing this is to ensure that your objectives are SMART, which means that they are:

Specific	You must be clear on exactly what you want to achieve.
Measurable	Will you able to tell when you have achieved your aim? What kind of things will tell you this?
Achievable	Is your aim realistic?
Resourced	Do you have the necessary resources? Think carefully about how much you money that you have.
Timed	When are you going to be able to achieve your aim. Make sure think about and set deadlines.

Share it out

It's always harder to achieve things on your own. It is much better to work with others - ensure staff and volunteers within an organisation as well as board members are all involved in the planning process with the responsibility for different aspects of things being shared.

Working together on a timetable with all the important dates and deadlines stated on it can help to clarify how much work there is to do, and how long you have to do it. Planning usually requires a great deal of work, so it is a good idea to try to get more people involved. Ways in which you can do this are by:

- Ensuring that everyone knows what you are planning to do, why and when. Make sure that meetings are well publicised.
- Thinking about the timing and location of your planning meetings; Make sure that you check with the people who are involved what will suit them best.
- Putting together a list of jobs so that it is clear who is responsible for what and when they are expected to do things by.

Think about what other local groups and organisations may need to be involved. They may have the expertise or knowledge in certain areas that can be a great help to you. They may also represent key groups that could be affected by your plans.

Make sure that you agree a good way to communicate with each other and ensure that this communication continues throughout the project and implementation of your plans. Good communication will help you to avoid making mistakes and prevent confusion as to what is happening.

Everything has a price

It is important to think about how much money you have, or don't have, to spend on implementing your plans. It might be nice to plan to introduce brand new state of the art computers for everybody in your organisation, but you need to think carefully about what you can actually afford. Very little is free, although you may be able to find sympathetic supporters who will give you things either for free or at a reduced costs.

When developing plans, you will need to keep an accurate record of the things you will need to spend money on and how much these different things are likely to cost.

Dot the 'I's and cross the 'T's

You need to make sure that you have considered everything in as much details as possible.

Make sure that you have talked to and involved all of the relevant people in the plans that you have made sure that they do not have any nasty surprises that they were not expecting.

Make sure that you have a separate plan for all different outcomes. Things might not happen exactly in the way that you would like them to do. Have you thought about what you are going to do if things go wrong?

It is better to have plans for lots of different situations and not need them all, than for something to go wrong and for you not to be prepared for it.

Reviewing your Plans

It is not over once the plan is developed and you start to put your plans into place. It is essential that when you start to carry out your plans that you continue to monitor and review them as you go along. If things change then you will need to change your plans to reflect this.

Once you have finished implementing your plans you should take some time to reflect on them. What was done well? What could be done better next time? Have you achieved what you set out to achieve?

Lobbying

What is Lobbying?

Lobbying refers to the process whereby people try to influence and persuade people with the power to make decision to follow a particular course of action. This could be on a topic that people are aware of such as a planned change in charity law. Alternatively it could be on a topic that people are not yet fully aware of such as a proposed change funding restrictions that will have a negative effect upon certain groups.

Why Lobby?

Lobbying can be an effective way to bring about the decisions that you want other people to make. Elected representatives and people in positions of powers are required to listen to the views of people who are being affected by things that they have control over and responsibility for. You may also want to influence board members of both your own and other organisations in the decision that they are making.

If you present these decision makers with well reasoned argument in an imaginative way then there is a good chance that they will have listen carefully and act on what you are saying.

How to Lobby

In order to lobby successfully on an issue you need to think carefully about this issue and how you are going to approach it. Listed below are some of the main things that you will need to think about:

- **What are you concerned about?** - The first step is to be clear on exactly what the issues are that you are concerned about. What is happening and why is it such a problem?
- **Get a group together** - Lobbying can be a very time consuming activity and if you work in a team you can get much more accomplished. Look for other people who are interested in the same issue and get them involved.
- **Set your goal** - Make sure you know what you want to achieve and when. Think of ways in which you can achieve your goals and ways around any problems you might encounter along the way.

Do your research – It is essential that you do as much research as possible on the issue you are interested in, making sure that you can support what you want with facts and examples. Try to think of why people may have different views to yours and look what the counterarguments to these may be.

Work out who's who - A very important step in effective lobbying is to work out who are the key people responsible for making the decisions on the topic that you are interested in. Listed below are some of the key types of people who are responsible for making decisions that may affect you.

- Elected Representatives e.g. Local Member of Parliament
- External Organisations e.g. the Police
- Committee members e.g. school governors
- Community groups e.g. a local youth clubs
- Other influential local figures e.g. local Business people

Those people not responsible for actually making the decision that you are trying to influence can still be very useful to you, as they often have influence which could help your organisation.

Once you have thought about the issue that you want to lobby on and how you are going to do it you will need to start communicating with the decisions makers whose minds you want to change. Writing letters and requesting meetings are two very common ways of doing this:

Methods of Lobbying

It is important that you promote your cause as much as possible, especially where decision makers may have their doubts about the action you want them to take. There are a number of different ways that you can do this and you do not need to pick just one of these but some or all of them can be addressed at the same time.


Letters/Email - When writing to people about an issue make sure that your letter is short and sticks to the point that you are trying to make. Try to make it interesting in some way so that it stands out from other letters received. Make sure you include facts and real life examples as a way to get your point across to people. Make sure that you ask them to reply and include your contact details in the letter.

Meetings – If you have a meeting with someone important to your campaign it is essential that you are well prepared. Be clear about what you want from the meeting and make sure that you have lots of facts and real life examples. Decide who is going to speak on each


issue. Let the local media know about the meeting as it can be a good chance to get some publicity for your campaign.


Make sure that you arrive on time for the meeting. Use examples and facts to help persuade them of the force of your arguments. Be polite, keep things short and make sure that you stick to the point of the meeting. It is helpful if someone takes notes of the meeting as it can be difficult to remember exactly what was said and agreed at the meeting.

After the meeting, make sure that you send a thank you letter, confirming anything that was agreed at the meeting and promising to keep them informed of your activities.

 **Events** – Putting on events can be an important way of promoting your cause as they can generate a lot of publicity. Events can also be a good and interesting way of putting your views across and if thought through and organised they can be a very effective means of getting your point across. Make sure that you formally invite the people who you are trying to influence and thank them for their attendance.

You can also use other peoples events to promote your cause. You could for example set up a stall at a festival, or send a speaker along to other debates or workshops.

 **Petitions** – Getting people to sign petitions can be a very good way of showing decision makers what level of support there is for the issue that you are lobbying on.

 **Using the media** – The media is a very important way for you to get your views across to a much wider audience and help you to get the support that you need. Media attention can have a big influence on the decisions that people make as they are aware that other people will question this decision and want to know why they have made it.

Don't Give Up!

Lobbying can take a lot of time and you will not always get what you want the first time of asking. You will learn some valuable lessons which you can then use to rethink your approach and then try again.

Time Management

You are probably already a very busy person and when you start taking on extra responsibilities such as getting involved in the governance of organisations you may soon find that you have lots to do but never enough time.

Sometimes you will feel that there just isn't enough time to do everything, however it is important to remember that by developing effective time management skills you can make your life easier. If you manage your time properly you will find that you are less pressured by deadlines or by the number of things that you have to do at the same time. You will feel that you are in control and you should be able to achieve a lot more. You will have more energy and free time to do the things that you love!

But why is time management so hard?

Ok so we can all see the benefits of good time management but why do we find it so hard to manage our time properly? Listed below are some areas where you might have difficulty using your time properly and some things that you can do to manage your time better.

Managing your workload

It is important that you keep a watch on how much work you have. There are times when you simply will have too much to do in the available time.

- Try to avoid taking too much on in the first place. If you are not going to have time to do some work then you need to be assertive and say that you are too busy.
- You must also make sure that you don't make a job bigger than it needs to be; Why have a long meeting that everyone has to travel to, when a series of emails would be a better way of solving a problem.

Planning

One of the biggest things that you can do to manage your time properly is planning. You need to make sure that you plan things as far ahead as possible.

- One way of doing this is by having a diary. This way you can make sure that you don't have too many things scheduled for yourself.

It can also remind you when things are due so you do not miss deadlines, or when you need to start work on them so that they are not left to the last minute.

- It is important to be able to prioritise the work that you have. This involves deciding which things are most important and therefore need to be done first and given most of your time. It also involves identifying which things can wait a little longer. These can be done when you have a bit more free time.

Procrastination!

When there is a lot of work to do it is amazing how interesting other tasks seem. Cleaning your room seems like fun and Channel 5 starts showing some really interesting programmes!

- You need to avoid these distractions. Try setting yourself targets such as if you do 1 hours work then you will phone a friend for a chat. If you really cannot stop yourself being distracted try going somewhere else to do your work e.g. the library.
- Explain to other people that you have a lot of work to do so that you don't get interrupted.
- Make sure if you have enough sleep so you are well rested as you will find it much easier to concentrate. It also important to drink lots of water as this will help you concentrate.

Finishing your work

Sometimes a lot of time can be used up in finishing a piece of work. It may be that there are some final pieces that you need to do that you leave until another time. Or it may be that you keep finding more things to change.

- It is important that when you start a task you try to finish it as you might find it harder to go back and do it later.
- You must not be too over critical of your work it is always possible to keep changing your work but you must be careful not spend too much time trying to be a perfectionist.

Being Organised

If you keep your time and your things organised you will find it much easier to know what you are supposed to be doing and where to find the things that need to do it.

Boring Tasks

We can't always do the things that we enjoy doing, sometimes we will also have to work that we find dull and boring.

- Try to do split this work up so you don't have lots of it to do at the same time. Mix it up with work that you do enjoy.
- Give yourself incentives to do this type of work, e.g. promise yourself an ice cream when you are finished

What we do:

The British Youth Council (BYC) is led by young people, for young people, aged 25 and under, across the UK. We connect with our community of member organisations and network of Local Youth Councils, to empower all of us, wherever we're from, to have a say and be heard. Our fresh take on training and volunteering and our lively campaigns – both local and global – inspire young people to have a positive impact and make their voices count.

How we can help:

We run training workshops, create volunteering opportunities and build inspiring campaigns which give everyone aged 25 and under a chance to make a positive contribution to society both in the UK and other countries.

We also link up with our Member Organisations and network of Local Youth Councils across the UK to share ideas, skills and information so that all young people can play a role in decisions about the things that matter.

Online:

Our free online Resource Centre is packed with information and briefings to help with the running of your local youth council. We have tips on how to run meetings effectively, the different roles at meetings and how to campaign effectively and make a difference. There are also resources covering fundraising, campaigning and managing the media.

In person:

We run a range of events throughout the year to support local youth councils, from delivering training courses right the way through to our annual Conventions. To find out what is going on and where, check out our events listings.

We also provide in house training for organisation that have young people as trustees . Have a look at the training pages of our website (www.byc.org.uk) for the latest training offerings. And if none offer what you need, we can offer bespoke sessions tailored to your needs.

On the phone:

Whether you are establishing a charity board with young people's involvement or looking to develop their involvement, we can help. Give us a call on 0845 458 1489 or email training@byc.org.uk

empowering inspiring campaigning since 1948



For more information

about BYC training:

www.byc.org.uk/training

or to download further resources:

www.byc.org.uk/resources

British Youth Council

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www.byc.org.uk

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