

## Working together as adults

Woodcraft Folk seeks to teach children and young people co-operative values and team work, and we expect all volunteers, adult members and staff to demonstrate the same values in their work with each other.

Woodcraft Folk benefits from a diverse team of volunteers, each group, district or Centre only flourishes when there is a strong leadership team – no one person can do everything on their own. Team members will bring diverse skills, contribute a varied number of volunteering hours and will have different motivation – All should be encouraged and valued.

The following principles were agreed between volunteers and staff to support effective working:

- Support the Aims and Principles of Woodcraft Folk
- Abide by policies and procedures
- Respect diversity and avoid discrimination and harassment
- Abide by democratic decisions
- Co-operate with volunteers and staff where appropriate
- Avoid intimidation (loud voice, body language)
- Avoid threats and bullying
- Treat others with respect and consideration (for workload and personal circumstances)
- Respect 'working' hours (allow staff and volunteers time off)
- Allow time to respond (immediate response is not always possible)
- Respect confidentiality and avoid gossip
- Use proper channels when raising issues
- Use financial resources responsibly
- Declare a conflict of interest where one might exist
- Take part in training when offered and relevant
- Carry out agreed roles or tasks
- Be clear if unable to fulfil a duty or if deadlines can't be met
- Check e-mails for tone and content before sending them to the correct recipient(s)
- Avoid moaning
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour when observing it in others
- Resolve conflict rather than ignore it
- Participate in mediation if it is thought to be necessary
- Accept differences of opinion

<https://woodcraft.org.uk/working-together-guidelines-0>

Any serious breach of the above principles can lead to disciplinary action under the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure (for staff) or under the Disputes and Complaints Procedure (for volunteers).

### ***Building firm foundations***

You can reduce the likelihood of conflict arising amongst volunteers in your group or district by taking some simple steps to agree how you will work together to meet Woodcraft Folk's aims. We recommend that all groups invest the time to:

- Explore individual motivations, to help you understand each other better
- Draw up a group agreement, setting out groundrules or guidelines about how you will treat each other, and expect to be treated
- Identify the support needs of all volunteers
- Agree and review role descriptions (e.g. Group Contact, Safeguarding Co-ordinator) to agree who will be accountable for key tasks, and lay out how decisions will be made
- Consider training needs of volunteers
- Complete the Sustainability Scorecard to identify areas for development
- Work through the **Working Together** training

It is good practice to review agreements from time to time, especially when new volunteers have joined you, so that they remain relevant and everyone feels a sense of ownership.

### ***What can you do when things are not working?***

Despite the best intentions there are times when adults struggle to work positively together, this is often due to breakdowns in communication and a mismatch of expectations. Frustrations, disagreements and conflict are natural and it is best to agree how you as a leadership team will respond to them before you actually have to deal with any.

When disagreements or conflict occurs in your group be proactive at trying to resolve the issues rather than hope they go away – things get harder to resolve the longer they are allowed to continue.

Revisiting your group agreement and role descriptions can help to identify what is going wrong, and how to get things back on track. You may also wish to:

- Talk to your Group Contact or District Co-ordinator about your concerns or area of disagreement
- Undertake training to strengthen your team's understanding of good practice
- Recruit new volunteers to increase capacity (see the Volunteer Toolkit for recruitment advice <https://woodcraft.org.uk/resources/woodcraft-folk-volunteer-toolkit>)

Ask for a facilitator from a neighbouring District or your regional committee if you feel you need it. If you have tried the above and things have not improved you can request support to complete the **Working Together** training, or ask for mediation from a volunteer from outside your group/district

### ***What is mediation?***

Mediation helps groups and individuals resolve disputes without recourse to an adversarial process which would result in one party 'winning' and another 'losing'. Where relationships have become strained or damaged, mediation provides a structured process where people can express themselves clearly and honestly, and rebuild effective communication.

### ***When it can help?***

All parties must start the mediation process willing to listen, talk and collaborate on an outcome. If members take part in mediation with a fixed outcome in mind then the process will not be helpful.

### ***Mediator role***

The mediator will make contact, typically by phone or email, to invite parties to the dispute to engage with the mediation process. Initially, they will conduct one-to-one meetings to gain an insight into the situation and give the parties a chance to share their views and feelings. Subject to the agreement of all participants, the next step will be for the mediator to facilitate a meeting between all parties to discuss their issues and consider how to move forward.

### ***What difference it can make?***

Successful mediation can rebuild relationships by helping parties to:

- Gain insight into each other's feelings and motivations
- Understanding how their own behaviour is perceived by others
- Focus on moving forward together rather than revisiting past disagreements
- Identify common ground, as well as accept where they may need to 'agree to disagree'

### ***How to request mediation support?***

Contact Woodcraft Folk's Membership & Groups Officer and request a mediator.

Please note that all Woodcraft Folk mediators are volunteers and you may have to wait a while and demonstrate a large degree of flexibility to be able to benefit from this service.

If you feel you could act as a mediator for a neighbouring group or District please contact the Membership & Groups Officer and volunteer.