

Common Problems and Possible Solutions

Even the most productive Crohn's & Colitis UK Network can encounter problems. Most can be dealt with without damaging the Network or causing offence. Not dealing with problems can harm the Network more than trying to tackle them, however sensitive the situation is.

A few common problems and their possible solutions are outlined below.

- Organising Team Members not Attending Meetings or Keeping in Touch
- Fluctuating Attendance Levels
- One person regularly dominating Organising Team or Network Meetings
- 'Cliques'
- Personality Clash
- Stagnation

Organising Team Members not Attending Meetings or Keeping in Touch

If an OT member misses more than one consecutive meeting without informing other team members, the Chair/Co-ordinator should contact them to find out if there is a problem. It may be necessary to ask them if they wish to remain on the OT or stand down.

Fluctuating Attendance Levels

All Crohn's & Colitis UK Organising Teams and Network meetings face highs and lows of attendance - it's perfectly normal, and can mostly be attributed to members' changing needs. However, changes in agenda/topic may also be a reason for differing attendance levels.

As people progress through their Crohn's or Colitis their needs change. Those who are newly diagnosed have different needs to members who have had Crohn's or Colitis for a long time. Topics of meetings should be chosen to reflect the range of needs, and may be of particular interest to specific Networks, for example:

- Younger members
- People about to undergo surgery
- People wanting to get pregnant
- Parents of children with Crohn's or Colitis
- Partners of people with Crohn's or Colitis.

If the event has been advertised widely and the venue is accessible, it is likely that people will attend. It should be remembered that it is always harder for people to talk about personal issues like Crohn's or Colitis so attendance may not be high, particularly as a Network is starting out.

Networks should inform any speaker(s) that attendance numbers can be unpredictable, which will help to avoid embarrassment if numbers are low.

If few people attend, the Network should continue with the planned activity and take the opportunity to share experiences in an informal and friendly atmosphere.

One person regularly dominating Organising Team or Network Meetings

This could be any Organising Team member, including the Chair or Co-ordinator. It could also be any member or visitor attending Network meetings.

If one person dominates, it may prevent others from expressing their opinions or thoughts, and in some cases may cause members to stop attending meetings or even leave the Crohn's & Colitis UK Network.

There are several reasons why a person may dominate a meeting:

- It could just be down to personality type
- It may be a way of seeking attention
- OT members may not know each other
- It may be the only way a member can feel heard

To deal with this behaviour:

- Bring it to their attention in a sensitive way
- Explain how their behaviour is causing a problem
- Remind them that the OT work as a Team
- Ensure that there is an agenda for OT meetings, and stick to it!
- Try saying: 'Could we hear from someone who has not spoken yet?' or 'What does anyone else think about...'
- Contact a member of the Volunteering Team

'Cliques'

Two or more people may, whether intentional or not, form a 'clique', rejecting other members of the OT or Network.

If this happens, it can be dealt with by:

- Reminding those involved to work as part of a Team
- Looking at the structure of the OT to see if any changes need to be made
- Asking if they have any ideas on how to work more closely as a Team
- Contact the Volunteering Team.

Personality Clash

As in all situations there may be people who just do not get along. This may be because people have conflicting ideas about how to deal with certain issues and refuse to accept one another's views or could simply be a personality clash.

In these circumstances:

- Remind them to work as a Team
- Discuss the situation with those concerned in a sensitive manner and explain how their behaviour is causing difficulties. Ask those involved whether they have any ideas on how to resolve this
- Contact the Volunteering Team for support.

If a member consistently causes disruption and is unwilling to change their behaviour, it may be necessary to ask them to leave. In these circumstances, please ask the Volunteering Team for advice.

Stagnation

Once a Network has been running for some time the Organising Team may find that enthusiasm and motivation have been lost, and that members do not seem to engage as well.

Try to create new interest by:

- Asking members what they would find beneficial
- Bringing in a new Chair/Co-ordinator or other OT members
- Joining forces with another Crohn's & Colitis UK Network
- Advertising for new members
- Focusing on a special project - for example fundraising for something locally
- Contacting the Volunteering Team or more ideas.

For support around these and other Network management issues please contact the Volunteering Team at networks@crohnsandcolitis.org.uk or on 01727 73 44 75.

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