Governance resources: Working as a team

We have all been part of a committee or staff team which has become destabilised when individuals with particularly strong views or personalities join. It is important that organisations are led by teams comprising of individuals with diverse skills and experience, and healthy debate takes place. However, where someone believes only their way is the right way or the "whole of committee approach" is bypassed in favour of factions and exclusion, a spiral of conflict can begin to spin out of control.

The following are some areas you can explore as a committee/ board to strengthen the cohesiveness of your organisation:

Board/ Committee members and staff have a good understanding of the role and activities of the organisation.

The organisation conscientiously maintains a culture built on trust, open discussion and good practise.

There is a clear understanding and endorsed documentation of the role and responsibilities of the committee/ board members and the role and responsibilities of the manager/ executive officer.

Quality policies and procedures exist and are reviewed to ensure they are current.

An agreed reporting process occurs to ensure all committee members have the information they need to make a decision.

All committee members understand the expectations around treating each other, staff and volunteers with respect and an open mind.

Decisions are debated and made in a full committee meeting, with information provided by the manager or committee members. Important decisions are not made be a select group unless they are a delegated subcommittee with terms of reference as approved by the full committee.

Committee members are encouraged to ask questions and feel safe to express an opinion that might differ to the majority. It is the responsibility of all committee members to ensure this occurs with respect. If the way someone is behaving makes you feel uncomfortable, name it there and then.

Committee/ Board members understand where they choose to volunteer at the house/centre they are not acting in the capacity of a committee/board member and are accountable to the manager or their direct supervisor. Any issues that arise in their capacity as a volunteer should be dealt with as per the House's Policies and Procedures for Volunteers.

Where a conflict arises, it is dealt with in a fair and timely manner using the prescribed process.

Committee members feel they are included, kept informed and part of a cohesive team without factions, personal agendas or gatekeeping.

There are many ways to be proactive to ensure your organisation is strong.

The CHAOS Network is able to assist members with resource materials on Delegations of Authority, policies and introduction of change.

Please contact the CHAOS Network by email: maureen@chaosnetwork.org.au