

# Dealing with conflict...

## Guidance Notes for BB Companies



*“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” – Matthew 5:9*

### Introduction

The Boys' Brigade has over 3,000 leaders in Scotland who give their time as volunteers to work with young people, supporting them in their own journey of learning, growth and discovery. We are fortunate that our leaders are dedicated, committed and passionate about the work of the Brigade.

With so many people caring so deeply about the work of the Brigade - comes the potential for differences of opinion and perspective which may lead to disagreement, argument and conflict.

These guidance notes offer a constructive way forward in resolving conflict within a Company.

Conflict does and will happen. It is desirable for measures to be put in place to reduce the possibility of conflict occurring, or to deal with it at an early stage; even something as simple as regular Officers' meetings give an opportunity for discussion of issues potentially avoiding a conflict. It is also very important that time is spent thinking about what steps would be followed to resolve and de-escalate a conflict. Ignoring or denial that there is a conflict does not resolve it and can escalate problems.

*“Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.” - Rev Martin Luther King, Jr.*

### Structure of the Brigade

As a Christian youth movement, the work of the Brigade is a part of the mission of the local Church, of which the Company is a part.

Each BB Company is led by a Captain who will have under his/her leadership volunteer leaders at different stages of their Brigade careers and with differing responsibilities. The responsibility of the Captain includes, among other things, the registration, administration and oversight of all Leaders within the Company.

The Captain, along with all other officers and members of staff of a Company, is appointed by that Kirk Session or similar body, and as such, the Captain is responsible to that Kirk Session. The Captain does their work in the name of the Kirk Session. A Captain must ensure that Leaders are sufficiently trained and supported in the fulfilment of their tasks so that standards of the Brigade are maintained and that all young people have a fulfilling experience as members.

The vision of The Boys' Brigade is that children and young people experience *“life to the full”*. – John 10:10

The Kirk Session (or equivalent) has oversight of a BB Company, although the day to day running of the Company is the responsibility of the Captain. However, the Kirk Session has an important role to play in the resolution of any serious conflict within a Company. In any situation of serious conflict, the Church authority should be notified at an early stage.

Any decision involving a leader being asked to leave a Company must be formally made by the Church authority and should be communicated formally to the leader, with them provided with opportunity to respond. The request of a leader to leave a Company is always the last resort.

## Keys to resolving conflict

- Manage the conflict and de-escalate as early as possible - don't let things bubble away!
- Don't ignore it, hoping it will go away – this can cause more problems.
- Conflict is best resolved at a local level.
- It is vital to listen and acknowledge different views – always try to see the other person's view point, you do not need to agree with them but try and understand their perspective.
- Be **clear** about what the problem is – define it, this is essential if you are going to explore it and deal with it. Be clear about what resolution is sought – again define it. The GROW model, first published by Sir John Whitmore, could be a useful way of resolving a difficult situation.
  - G**oal – what do you want to achieve as an outcome
  - R**eality – acknowledge the reality of where you are now
  - O**ptions – explore & discuss different options of what can be done
  - W**ay forward – agree what will be done to move forward
- Good and clear communication can help avoid or add to existing conflict.
- When conflict has arisen – it is important that any kind of further communications (face to face, telephone, email text) are given careful time and consideration. It is always best to think carefully before replying to something that you disagree with.

*“Hot tempers cause arguments, but patience brings peace.” - Proverbs 15:18*

- Confidentiality should be observed, with only those who need to know being informed – and both 'sides' of the conflict knowing who has been informed. Messages relating to a conflict should not be shared online (i.e. social media) in any way.
- If a conflict between leaders within a Company becomes more serious it is vital to involve the Church – both in terms of informing them of what is happening and asking for their support and involvement in mediation. An important role of the Chaplain is to offer pastoral assistance to the Company.
- Any decision involving a leader being asked to leave a Company must be made by the Church and should be communicated formally to the leader with them given proper opportunity to respond.

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NVCO) suggests that resolving conflicts requires different skills, including - active listening, communication, problem solving, decision making and negotiation.

## What the Bible Says about conflict?

Resolving conflicts is challenging, but the Bible offers help and guidance. In 1 Corinthians Chapter 3, there is conflict in the Church: Paul speaks of jealousy and quarrelling. At the root of it is people following their own ways. The conflict is between those who would follow Apollos and those who would follow Paul. Paul reminds them that even though there are differences, we are all called to act together as servants of God. In like manner, in the Brigade, we are called to resolve conflict not for our own position or power but so that we can better advance Christ's kingdom.

Jesus said, *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your friends, hate your enemies.’ But now I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may become the children of your Father in heaven.”* - Matthew 5:43-45a

## Ethos and Values of the Brigade

The Object of The Brigade focuses on the advancement of Christ's kingdom. We must always ask ourselves if what we are doing and how we are doing it is reflective of advancing Christ's kingdom, especially when conflict has arisen.

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”* – Mark 12: 30-31