

# DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

Learning Guide



**Note:** Although in some parts of the British Isles Scout Counties are known as Areas or Islands – and in one case Bailiwick - for ease of reading, this publication simply refers to County/Counties. In Scotland there is no direct equivalent to County or Area. In Scotland, Scouting is organised into Districts and Regions, each with distinct responsibilities. Some 'County' functions are the responsibility of Scottish Regions, whilst others lie with Scottish Districts. The focus of responsibility is outlined in Scottish Variations from POR.

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## **Edition**

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# Dealing with Difficult Situations Learning Guide

## What is the purpose of this learning guide?

This learning guide is aimed at managers and supporters in Scouting. The purpose of this learning guide is to build on the information given in the video [Dealing with Difficult Situations](#). As well as providing extra details of some of the models outlined in the video, it also seeks to help you reflect on how to apply them in your Scouting role.

The total learning time for this resource is approximately 30 minutes.

## How to complete this learning guide

Before completing this learning guide you should watch the video [Dealing with Difficult Situations](#).

Read through the chapters in this learning guide for a more detailed explanation of some of the models outlined in the video and complete the tasks to help you reflect on how to apply them to your role in Scouting. If you are unsure of a theory or task, revisit the video and discuss it with your Training Adviser or line manager. Then go back and complete the learning guide.

## While using the workbook you will see the following symbol:



**Task:** activities, discussions or reflections for learners to undertake

Throughout this learning guide you will be undertaking practical activities, making notes and reflecting on relevant examples from your Scouting experiences. We hope that the video and learning guide will provide you with useful knowledge to aid you in your role in Scouting.

## What resources do I need to accompany this learning guide?

- [Dealing with Difficult Situations](#) (video)

## Associated reading

Further resources are available from the Member Resources section of [scouts.org.uk](https://scouts.org.uk), including:

Suspension resources:

- [The suspension process](#)
- [Guidance notes for a person under suspension](#)
- [Supporting a person under suspension](#)
- [Support webinar on the suspension process](#)

Complaints resources:

- [Complaints information for managers](#)
- [Resolving complaints: TSA complaints procedure](#)
- [Complaints procedure flow chart](#)
- [Writing response letters to complaints and appeals \(hints, tips, examples and best practice\)](#)
- [A document for complaints \(for members considering making a complaint\)](#)
- [Support webinar on the complaints process](#)

General Support:

- **An approach to problem solving**
- **Dealing with difficult situations**
- **Right people right roles**
- **Appeal procedure flow chart**

Additional resources:

- Building Effective Teams – **video and learning guide**
- Enabling Change – **video and learning guide**
- Planning For Growth - **video and learning guide**
- Keeping, Developing and Managing Volunteers - **video and learning guide**

# Preventing Disagreements

## Reasons for conflict

Conflict is a disagreement that exists in any situation where facts, desires or fears set people against each other. Most people want to avoid conflict as much as possible and tend to steer themselves away from potentially stressful situations. However, anywhere that you have lots of people working together, disagreements and personality clashes will happen.

Conflict occurs for a number of reasons, e.g.:

- personality clashes
- miscommunication
- differing expectations
- personal lives.

As a manager or supporter in Scouting you will need to be prepared to spot disagreements early and manage the situation.

## Preventing disagreement

There are some key points to keep in mind when approaching and dealing with conflict within Scouting:

- individuals and groups have different values, perceptions, expectations and needs. You need to not only recognise that these differences exist, but also accept these differences as equally real and valid
- good relationships are essential. In order to recognise, accept and understand the people you work with, you need to spend energy and time getting to know them. Try to remain calm and constructive and treat each other with mutual respect
- set ground rules to ensure that everyone is clear on what is and what is not appropriate behaviour.
- listen carefully to others. Never assume that you are automatically right and they are wrong
- encourage people to work together towards a solution so that everyone benefits from the situation. Be open to the idea that a compromise may exist and explore this together, so that everyone understands why and how a decision has been reached
- being a role model for positive behaviour will demonstrate to others how best to approach and deal with conflict



## Task: Preventing disagreement

Think about your team as a whole and the relationships between individuals on your team. Take a moment to reflect on the specific actions you can take in your role to try to prevent disagreements from occurring.

# Conflict Resolution

People will have different ways of dealing with conflict depending on their personality. The Thomas-Kilman theory of conflict resolutions shows that people will tend to fall on a scale between being assertive, to stand up for their own goals, and being cooperative, to find a shared solution. Thomas-Kilman asserted that most people have a preferred conflict resolution style, but also that different styles can be best suited to different situations. The 5 styles and the relationships between them are represented in the diagram below:



It is important to know your team and understand them as individuals. Being aware of people's personalities, motivations and experiences will help you understand how people in your team work together and where differences of opinion may occur. This will help you to spot where conflict could occur and prevent it from escalating.

## Competitive

Common characteristics:

- takes a firm stand
- knows what they want
- operates from a position of power (e.g. role, expertise, persuasiveness).

Best used:

- in an emergency, when a quick decision is required
- when a decision is likely to be unpopular
- in defence if a person is trying to exploit a situation for personal gain.

Disadvantages:

- can upset people and cause them to feel unsatisfied and resentful if used in less urgent situations.

## **Collaborative**

Common characteristics:

- tries to meet the needs of all those involved.
- can be highly assertive. However, unlike the competitor, they cooperate effectively and acknowledge that everyone is important.

Best used:

- to bring together a variety of viewpoints to find the best solution
- when there have been previous conflicts within the group
- when the situation is too important for a simple trade-off.

Disadvantages:

- not ideal when a quick decision needs to be made.

## **Compromising**

Common characteristics

- attempts to discover a solution that will please everyone, at least in part
- expects everyone to give up something, including the compromiser resolving the conflict.

Best used

- when the cost involved in continuing the conflict is higher than the cost of relinquishing something
- when the two parties involved are of equal strength and are at a point of deadlock
- when there is a close deadline.

Disadvantages

- it is not an ideal situation for either party.

## **Accommodating**

Common characteristics:

- eager to meet the needs of others, often at the expense of their own person needs
- usually know when to give in to others
- can also be persuaded to surrender a position, even when this is not justified
- very cooperative
- not assertive.

Best used:

- when the issue at hand matters more to the other party involved
- when peace is more valuable than winning
- when you want someone to be indebted to you, so that you can utilise this at a later date.

Disadvantages

- people may not return favours as anticipated
- overall this approach is unlikely to give the best outcomes as it can cause further tensions.

## Avoiding

Common characteristics:

- usually seeks to evade the conflict entirely
- will delegate controversial decisions to others
- accepting of default decisions
- eager not to cause upset or offence.

Best used:

- when victory is impossible
- when the controversy at hand is trivial
- when someone else is in a better position to solve the problem.

Disadvantages:

- in many situations this can be a weak and ineffective approach to take as it could mean that the situation does not get resolved.<sup>1</sup>



### Task: Conflict resolution

Think about a time in your Scouting role when you have encountered conflict. Reflect on what you would keep and what you would change in your handling of the disagreement. Write your thoughts in the space below.

# Suspension and Cancellation

Suspension is a neutral act intended to protect everybody involved. It helps to ensure that any investigation or inquiry proceeds in as fair and objective a manner as possible and prevents situations occurring that could give rise to further concerns. The **Policy, Organisation and Rules (POR)** outlines reasons for suspension and who is responsible for the decision.

In some cases, it may be decided that the best thing to do would be to cancel the adult's membership or dismiss them from The Scout Association.

The following resources provide additional information about the suspension process:

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<sup>1</sup> Reference 'Mindtools', [http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR\\_81.htm](http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_81.htm), accessed on 21/12/2015

- [The Suspension Process](#)
- [Guidance notes for a person under suspension](#)
- [Supporting a person under suspension](#)
- [Support webinar on the suspension process](#)

# Complaints

The Scout Association has developed a Complaints Procedure to help in dealing with disagreements. However, it is recommended that the resolution of complaints should be an informal process locally wherever possible. It is also important to remember that the Complaints Procedure should not be used to handle Safeguarding matters.

The following resources provide additional information about the complaints process:

- [Complaints information for managers](#)
- [Resolving complaints: TSA complaints procedure](#)
- [Complaints procedure flow chart](#)
- [Writing response letters to complaints and appeals \(hints, tips, examples and best practice\)](#)
- [A document for complaints \(for members considering making a complaint\)](#)
- [Support webinar on the complaints process](#)



## Task: Complaints

Consider what advice you would give to someone dealing with a complaint. Come up with three top tips to support them.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

# You're Not Alone

There are many resources designed to help guide you when dealing with challenging situations. Remember that you can always seek help from your line manager or guidance from the Information Centre.

Further support:

- **An approach to problem solving**
  - **Dealing with difficult situations**
  - **Right people right roles**
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You have now completed the independent learning guide for 'Dealing with Difficult Situations'.

For more information on dealing with difficult situations and other training resources for managers and supporters in Scouting, please visit **[scouts.org.uk](https://scouts.org.uk)**.