



Wales YFC

Guide to being

Club Secretary





Introduction

Congratulations for taking on an official role within your club.

Being a Club Officer comes with responsibility but it will be worthwhile. Over the next twelve months, your knowledge of your Club, your County structure and Wales YFC will increase tenfold!

Taking on the Club Secretary role can be daunting but, with some organisation and this "How to..." guide, you will soon be running your club efficiently. This step by step guide should cover most situations you will encounter as Secretary, advising you on good practice and pitfalls to avoid.

Enjoy your twelve months as Club Secretary. Remember, if you need help, don't be afraid to ask for it. Good luck and enjoy your time in post!

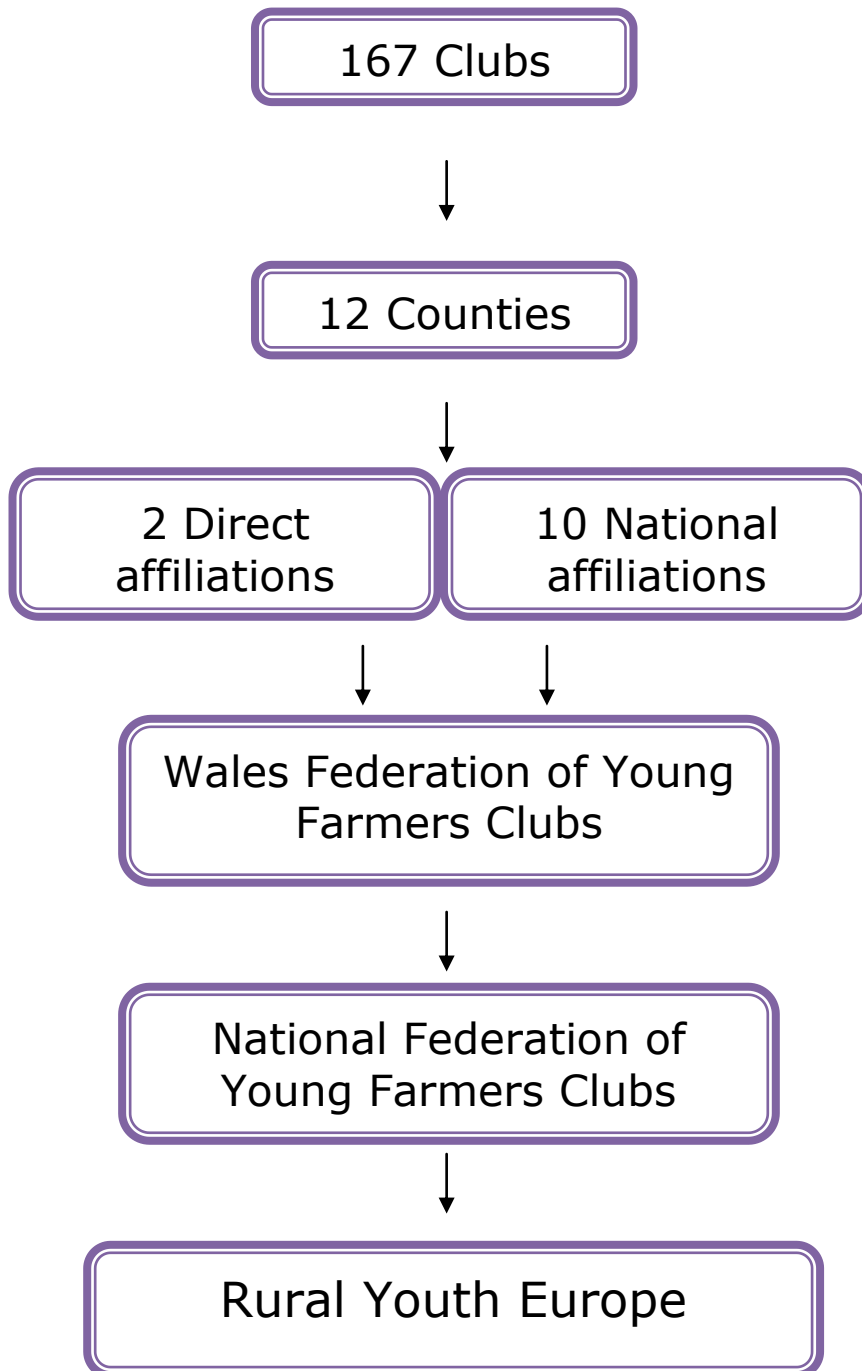
Structure of YFC

There are 167 clubs within Wales, belonging to 12 different Counties. Out of these 12 Counties, 10 affiliate to the National Federation of Young Farmers. The two others, Ynys Môn and Eryri, affiliate directly to Wales YFC only.

We as an organisation are a member organisation of a larger group, a European youth organisation, Rural Youth Europe. Our five nations partners, Ireland (Macra Na Feirme), Northern Ireland (Young Farmers Clubs of Ulster), Scotland (Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs, SAYFC) and England (National Federation of Young Farmers Clubs, NFYFC) also are part of Rural Youth Europe.



Here is the structure:





Role of a Secretary

Depending on how your Club and County are set up, you may have more than one Secretary; this is completely normal and does not matter as long as those in the roles know their responsibilities.

There are many different aspects of being a Secretary and, depending on your club, you may do all of them or a combination of them, you may be the minute secretary, the social secretary or the “do it all type of secretary”!

To make life easier for you, this guide will cover all aspects of being a Secretary, then you can select the pages that are relevant to you.

From the start

Being Club Secretary is arguably one of the hardest jobs in Club. Getting a few things organised first can help get your year off to a good start. One of the main qualities you will need is organisation; if you master this skill you will be a very efficient Secretary.

During your club AGM, you have been voted in as Secretary by your fellow members. This is an exciting time as a member; taking on such a role is a privilege and will significantly increase your knowledge of the movement. At the AGM, you can take advantage of all members, Club Leaders and possibly even a County representative being present. Introduce yourself to those who do not know you and get phone numbers and email addresses from all your members. This will be essential for you throughout the year as establishing a good contact with members is key to ensuring communication between Club and County.

At the AGM

One of the first things you need to do is let your County Office know you are starting as Secretary for your club, as soon after the AGM as possible. This will ensure all correspondence and information gets to you.

Remember to ask if the Club has a Facebook or Twitter page (if you don't already know this) and ask to become admin on these groups in order to effectively update your social media.

Speak to last year's Secretary; after all they have done a year in post and they know what the job entails!

Correspondence

One of your main duties is dealing with correspondence. As Club Secretary you will receive a large volume of letters and emails and it is your job to sort through and decide what is essential to discuss and what you just need to pass on to members for their information.

Entry Forms & Rules

All competition entry forms will be included in your correspondence and these will have deadlines for completion.

Be careful to read all your correspondence and make a note of when things need to be completed. This will ensure you do everything you need to within the given deadline and will ensure your club does not lose marks for late entries or fail to compete as no entry has been made. Along with entry forms you will receive rules for competitions. It is important to pass these on to your competing members. Most confusion and queries on the day of a competition are the result of members not fully understanding or reading the rules. Take time to discuss the rules with your competitors and if there is any doubt as to what is required, contact your County Office for clarification.

Events

From time to time you may receive correspondence from other events within the community. This may be from other clubs or external organisations.

It is important to promote these events, even though they may be similar to ones you are running yourself (Christmas Quiz/ Barn dances/ Bingo evening) as the more you support other clubs, the more they will support you! It also helps to promote the YFC within your community.

Along with local events you will receive posters and letters promoting events, competitions and meetings your County may be hosting. There may also be events to promote from Wales and National Federations. It is important to inform your members of these events so that they have the opportunity to participate.

Letters

Sometimes you will receive letters; it may be a letter of thanks or from another club inviting you to an event. There may be times when you receive a letter of complaint. If this does happen, ensure the letter is read out during a formal Club meeting so that the members can discuss the issue. As always, ensure the decision made is noted in the minutes.

Dealing with correspondence

Although you need to ensure you read all correspondence carefully, it is essential you are effective at sifting what needs to be read out entirely to members and what may be summarised. Although members should be made aware of all correspondence, sorting it out will ensure meetings don't drag.

You can do this effectively by having a simple filing system in place. You can sort your correspondence into three groups: things that need an urgent reply, things for information only and things which require a Club decision.

This way you should be able to prioritise what you need to discuss and will ensure the Chairman deals with important correspondence at the beginning of the meeting, rather than running out of time for a proper discussion and decision!

Key points for correspondence

- Always acknowledge all of your correspondence, even if the Chairman is summarising the purpose of the letter, you should always inform club of what you have received.
- Always send reminders to your Presidents and Club Advisory Committee of any forthcoming dates they may need to know about.
- Send a letter of thanks when appropriate.
- Keep all members up to date with current events, especially if they haven't attended for a while. It is nice to ensure everyone feels involved.



Club Programming

Depending on your club officials, you may or may not be involved in planning a Club programme. If it is part of your role, here are a few tips on how you can create a diverse and interesting Club programme.

Club programming is a vital part of running a successful club. It is important to strike the correct balance between business meetings, social and learning new skills. Not only this, the club needs to ensure its public image is maintained.

When programming for your club you need to keep in mind the need for balance. Remember, if you've done all the hard work planning your Club Programme, take the time to ensure members, leaders, parents and your County Office all have a copy!

Business meetings

These are essential for the correct running of a Club. YFC is a democratic movement and business meetings give members the opportunity to voice their opinions. They can often be seen as boring, so it is vital for your club to understand the need and importance of attending business meetings.

The best way to tackle this is by keeping the meeting brief, relevant and well run, with people able to voice their opinions.

County officials also love the chance to get out and meet members within the Clubs, don't be afraid to invite your County Officials out to club as part of your programme.

Social

One of the main reasons for joining YFC is for young people to come together, meet new people and learn new skills. For that reason it is important that you have a well-established and organised social programme.

Visits to other organisations within your community or to another Club's event will all help keep moral high! Not only this, but your visit will help raise the profile of YFC within the community. Remember YFC is inclusive for all young people aged between 10 and 26 so activities should be suitable for all ages.

Skills

An important aspect of YFC is development. Members get the opportunity to develop in a variety of ways, such as holding a post in club or competing. Why not incorporate this into your club evenings? Have a skills evening promoting competition skills you will use in YFC!

For more Programming ideas see NFYFC Club Officer Guides "**Club Mix**".

Business Meetings

As Secretary you have an important role to play within business meetings.

There are several things you should prepare for a Club meeting. One of the most important things you need to do is have a good working relationship with your Chairman. The better the communication between you and your Chairman, the more effectively the meeting will be and the more smoothly it will run.

Before the meeting

Before the meeting there are several things you will need to do. Below is a quick checklist to remind you:

- ✓ Book the venue
- ✓ Inform the members of the meeting, time, place, and what will be covered in the meeting
- ✓ Inform Club Leaders of the meeting
- ✓ Inform speaker/activity of arrival time and directions if needed
- ✓ Prepare correspondence and agenda for meeting

It is good practice to meet the Chairman beforehand to discuss the meeting's agenda and run through the correspondence. This will ensure the meeting runs as smoothly as possible. Brief the Chairman on important dates such as entry deadlines and competition days.

If you are having a guest speaker, ensure your Chairman knows who they are and what organisation they are from. It may seem a simple thing, but saves a lot of embarrassment and ensures the Chairman introduces a guest speaker correctly! You also need to ensure someone has been asked to give a vote of thanks at the end of your guest's presentation.

During the meeting

Depending on your role within the Club, you may need to take minutes during the meeting. If this is something you do, please refer to the following page which gives details on minutes for more guidance.

If you don't have to take the minutes, ensure you work alongside the minute secretary so you both are aware of what decisions are made during the meeting, along with any action that needs to be taken.

Following the meeting

Again depending on your role, you may need to write up the minutes from the meeting. If this is not the case, ensure you follow up any thank you letters and responses to any correspondence that were decided by the members in the meeting.

Minutes

As part of your role you may also be asked to carry out the role of Minute Secretary. Ensuring minutes are taken accurately is essential. Sample minutes are available from Wales YFC.

Taking minutes is simple once you know how. You need to make sure you include important information and decisions that the club have made.

Within your minutes, you should always have the same core information:

- Name of your club
- Type of meeting taking place i.e. Business meeting
- Time and Date
- Where the meeting was held
- Those who were present (or state they were as recorded in attendance book)
- Apologies for Absence
- Record of any decisions made, including the proposals and who proposed and seconded them, along with what was passed by members.

It is important that your minutes are an accurate account of what has taken place within the meeting. They should be concise and should not include who said what specifically unless any motions are made – you do not need to list exactly who said what!

Be mindful to include the following:

- The precise wording of any resolution made along with the name of the proposer and the seconder.
- The outcome of the vote and any relevant discussion
- Any action required and by whom
- Time and date of next meeting
- Record of thanks for any speakers that may have attended along with who proposed vote of thanks
- Time that the meeting was declared closed

The Minute Secretary has a responsibility to keep the record of the club for that year. Minutes serve a very important purpose when looking back over a club's history, so old minutes should always be kept safe.

Contact your County Office for details of archiving old minute books.

Preparing an Agenda

As Secretary, an important part of your role is to prepare the agenda for business meetings in conjunction with your Chairman.

Ensure important items are at the top of the agenda, ensuring you've got time to discuss them properly. Putting less urgent items at the end of the agenda means that they can be moved to the following week's meeting if you are running short of time.

Always be mindful of 'any other business', as this can prolong the length of the meeting if a large discussion takes place.

It is good practice to have a discussion with the Chairman before a meeting, to ensure your Chairman is aware of everything that needs to be discussed and that the agenda is relevant to that meeting.

A sample agenda is shown below:

Agenda

Club Name YFC

**Club meeting held on 01/01/2015
at YFC room, YFC building, 8.00pm**

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of last meeting
3. Matters arising from the minutes
4. Correspondence
5. To receive any reports
6. Forthcoming events and activities
7. Any other business
8. Time and date of next meeting





Communication

As Secretary, it is essential that you keep in touch with all of your members regularly. You can do this in a range of ways. It is important you don't rely on one method of communication. It is easy to miss someone out from a mailing list or group text, so make sure you inform your members in as many ways as possible to ensure they all have the chance to know about your meeting or event.

Telephone

By picking up the phone and speaking to your members, you will get an answer quickly! It's the easiest way of communicating with members. Remember to keep a record of calls made for YFC purposes if you wish to claim telephone expenses.

Email

Emailing your members is a simple way of getting information to members, particularly if there are documents which need to be shared. Sending rules and competition details via email can be the easiest and cheapest way to get these essential documents to members.

When sending emails remember to Blind Carbon Copy (BCC) members' email addresses in. This is important for Data Protection and ensures those people who would prefer not to have their details shared are respected.

Writing a letter

As old fashioned as it seems, writing a letter can be an effective way of communicating with members. At certain times of the year, you will have to send out formal letters. This could be a letter of thanks for speakers, or letters of invitation to your Club's Annual General Meeting. This should be done well in advance (at least a month's notice for an AGM) to ensure your President and Club Leaders are all present.

Text

One of the simplest and quickest ways to get a reminder to all your members, texts are a great way to send a gentle reminder! Whether it is informing members of a meeting or a reminder to bring a raffle prize with them, it works and it's quick!

Take care to include every member in group texts and remember to contact anyone who does not have a mobile in a different way. Remember that not all members in YFC have mobile phone signal or internet in their homes.



Social Media

You may be able to update your Club's Facebook or Twitter feed. Clubs often use social media sites to keep members up to date.

It is very important when using Social media to keep in mind that it is a public forum. Nothing personal or private should be shared on sites. It is also advised that club pages and feeds remain private and closed. This will ensure that only your club members and associates find out about events and information relating to YFC.

Posters

Once the club has gone to the effort of organising an event, one way to ensure people are aware of it is putting posters up. Display posters in local post offices, schools, community centres, pubs and ask your County office to display it on their website.

New Members' Evenings

Although retention of members is important, you must also remember to encourage new members to join. The easiest way of doing this is to host a new members' evening.

The easiest way to source new members is using contacts you already have within Club: ask members whether they have brothers, sisters, family or friends who would like to join your Club. Once you have a list of names, invite those people.

A letter inviting them to the new members' evening will make them feel welcome. This is also a good opportunity to share information with parents, such as where the evening will be held, what time their children should be dropped off and picked up and contact details of someone in club.

Try to make sure you introduce yourself to new parents as they drop their children off. Once the activity has taken place, ensure you give all the new members a copy of the current club programme and encourage them to come along to your next meeting/event and give them a membership form, so they can become a signed up members as soon as possible.

Trips

Within your year as Secretary, there may be an occasion where your Club would like a trip away, such as a Christmas shopping trip, a trip to a theme park or to see a Pantomime.

When considering planning a trip away, do not leave all the planning until the last minute. It is a good idea to plan trips at least a month in advance.

When planning a club trip, it is important to consider all the details that will need to be organised. This includes, time, date, transport, contact details, pick up and drop off times.

Depending on the trip, you need to assess whether members can drive or whether a bus will be needed. Remember, if members are taking other members in their vehicles they should have business use on their insurance and you also need to be aware of safeguarding issues when junior members are being transported by other members or leaders.

If you are using a bus, try to get approximate numbers going on the trip as the bus size will alter the quote given. The more information you know regarding who's going and where to, the better.

Once you have a suitable quote and the tickets/arrangements are in place, you can then open the trip up for members, once they have approved the plans in a business meeting. To minimise the number of people dropping out, ask for a deposit or full payment to be handed in by a specific date.

When booking members on a trip it is important to take some key details. Members under eighteen will need to complete parental consent forms. Your county office will have a format you can use. As part of this form, there should also be a section for contact details, and medical details. This will ensure that, should a problem arise, you have all the correct details to hand.

A good old fashioned register will help you keep track of those on the trip, especially when it comes to home time!

Ensure that all parents and members are aware of all the details and ensure any money received by you is given to the Club Treasurer at the earliest convenience.



Competitions

A large majority of your role will revolve around competitions. As Secretary, you are the line of communication between your Club and County Office.

There are two aspects to what you need to do for competitions: what the County Office needs to know and what the member needs to know.

County Office

Most competitions will have an entry form, with a deadline for making the entries. Your job as Secretary is to make sure they get the information they need and by the date given! Ensure you fill out entry forms completely, including all the details.

Club

You may have a club meeting to go through competitions. If this is the case, ensure you are prepared for the meeting. Make sure you have all the relevant entry forms and rules with you. It is essential you read all the rules fully when asking individuals to take part in that competition. Also, remember to look for the age the member needs to be on 1st September.

Once you have a member that has agreed to compete, ensure you have all their details correctly filled in on the entry form. It is also important to ensure the member knows when and where the competition is taking place. Another good idea is to provide the member with a set of rules for their competition, or to let them know where they can find the rules. This will allow the member to have a reference when practising or planning for their competition.

Committees

Within your role as Secretary, there may come a time where you as a club want some clarification on a rule, or are uncertain on some wording in regards to a particular competition. If this is the case, you may be able to resolve the query with a quick phone call to your County Office. However, if you have a more complicated issue or the Club would like to make a suggestion on how the competition could be changed for the better, you may want to take your comments to a County Committee. Depending on your County this could be the Activities or Competitions committee. Committees are the place to voice your club's opinion and find out more about what happens at a County level.

A few essentials...

As Club Secretary, there are a few final things you need to make sure you are familiar with in order for the year in Club to run smoothly.

Club Constitution

Every Club should have a copy of their Constitution in the front of the minute book. The Club Constitution is a legally binding document, which sets down the existence of the Club and its purpose. Within the constitution are details such as the name of the Club, the purpose and powers of the Club, details on its membership, officers and finance. The Constitution should be adopted by the Club during the Annual General Meeting and signed by the current Chairperson.

CRBs (now DBS)

As Secretary of the Club you are responsible for ensuring your Club Officers are aware of the County's policy on DBS. It is good practice for all officers in post, including Club Leaders, to undertake a DBS check. This can be done simply and is free for volunteers and, contrary to belief, you must have a specific DBS for YFC purposes, unless you have signed up for a transferable DBS. Speak to your County office for further advice on DBS.

Keeping Records

You will be required to keep many of the Club's previous and current records. These documents are important to the Club and need to be kept securely. Records could simply be a contacts list, names and addresses of members and supporters of the club, membership details such as allergy or medical information and blank risk assessments. You may keep records in a file, or your club may have storage facilities, but ensure you are aware of what is where. The key thing to bear in mind with keeping records is confidentiality. You must respect this at all time and ensure only those who need information have access to it.



Handling cash

As Secretary, you may be required to collect monies for a given purpose, i.e. trips away, along with consent forms. If this is the case, ensure you have a system of recording what has been received from whom. This can simply be a cash receipt book. This way there is always a record of transaction between yourself and the member before the money is received by the Treasurer; you should pass it on as soon as possible after receiving it. Ideally, the Treasurer should collect money directly where possible.

Expenses

You may want to claim back expenses throughout the year. This could be for phone calls, stamps, photocopying, etc. It is important that you keep records of all your expenses; this will allow the Treasurer to reimburse you. Keep a note in a diary and retain any receipts. Without receipts for items, the Treasurer will be unable to reimburse you. Large purchases will need to be agreed by the club before they are made.

Health and Safety

It is important you as an Officer team are aware of current Health and Safety guidelines. It may be part of your role to complete Risk Assessments for trips, meetings or dances. Risk Assessments are crucially important and must be completed correctly. Your County will be able to provide advice both on Health and Safety procedures and Risk Assessments.



Club AGM- again!

Your year as Secretary is coming to a close and one last job of yours is to arrange the Club AGM. Your club may have a date set from the start of your YFC year, or this may have been decided in a meeting.

You need to inform Members, the President, Vice President(s), Club Leaders, Associate members, members of your Club's Advisory committee and a representative from your County Federation.

Notice of the AGM needs to be sent out to those listed at least a month before the meeting date. Remember to include all the details, including date, time and venue.

Agenda

Within the AGM Agenda there are things that must be included:

- Accounts: To be given in the annual report by the Treasurer, accounts need to have been audited or independently examined and produced in a Statement of Accounts
- Election of Officers
- Election of Auditors- election of person to audit/ examine the club accounts
- Election of Club Leaders

All elections at the AGM should be carried out by Secret Ballot, so ensure you prepare sufficient voting slips beforehand.

You may want to accompany the Agenda for the AGM with some further notes; it is the biggest meeting you as a club will hold throughout the year, so it is important members know what is going on and understand their role.

Voting rights

It is important that all present at the AGM understand their voting rights to ensure the meeting is truly democratic.

Every current member present has one vote on all matters, with the vote being decided by the majority. In the case of a tie situation, the Chairman will have the deciding vote.

Club leaders, Associate members, Advisory committee members and any County officials present do not have a vote. Vice Presidents and Life Members usually do not have a vote but be sure by checking your Club Constitution, as some roles may carry a vote in your club.

You should appoint Tellers before the meeting begins to collect and count the ballot papers. Tellers should be people who are not eligible to vote.

Club Subscription

During the AGM the Club's annual subscription (membership fee) should be decided. When deciding subscription, there are a few things members need to be mindful of. Does your club fee cover the entire cost of your County Federation and National Federation annual subscription and Insurance costs?

You as a club need to make the decision whether you will subsidise your member's subscription fees, ask your Treasurer to give the Club some guidance on the financial situation before making the decision.

Election of club officials

Election of your officer roles will happen every year, at the AGM meeting. Officers are eligible to stay on for more than one year's service, but must be re-elected by the majority vote. The following club Officers will be elected yearly: Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. There may be further roles elected within your club if you wish.

Club leaders are also elected each year at the Club AGM. Suggestions for Club Leaders will be put to the club during the AGM meeting and voted on by the membership.

A few things to remember

- Has the venue been booked?
- Have you checked with your President they are comfortable to Chair the AGM meeting? If they are unable to make it, is there a Vice-President willing to Chair the meeting?
- Does your club usually have a pre-AGM meeting? If so has this date been booked and confirmed with the members?
- Motions: If you have any motions to be passed at the AGM, do members know what date these need to be received by?
- Have the accounts been properly audited and signed? Who will present the accounts at the AGM? You need to ensure a copy is sent to the County Office too.

Top Ten Tips for being a Club Secretary

1. Tell everybody everything. Twice.
2. Make a group contacts list on your phone and on your email account at the start of the year, but don't forget to add new members through the year.
3. Make a list of numbers of village hall contacts in the area.
4. Get to know your County staff and Officials. They will be able to help you out and share ideas on a wide range of YFC topics. Many of them may well have been a Club Secretary.
5. Think ahead – whether it's entering teams a month ahead of the competition itself, or planning the Christmas party at Halloween, it's good to know things are sorted well in advance.
6. Make a template of an agenda and use the same format for each meeting.
7. Junior members may need a lot of help to prepare for competitions. Ask if they need help finding a trainer or somewhere to rehearse.
8. Senior members are big enough to sort themselves out. Don't feel you have to run round after them!
9. You can't do it all. You are not solely responsible for the Club – the other Officials and the members will all be willing to help out.
10. If you're stepping down at the end of the year, keep your agendas, posters, contacts list, etc. in a file or on a memory stick. Give that file to the new Secretary – it's the best thing you can possibly do for the Club!