

# The Membership Secretary

Membership is vital to the NCT for three reasons. Firstly, the NCT is a charity run for parents by parents. Secondly, we aim to be the voice of parents and can only achieve this if we have a large membership. Finally, membership fees keep the NCT afloat. Without them the charity could not exist. Just as membership is vital to the NCT, so the membership secretary plays an important role locally. She is often the first NCT contact for parents who have not gone to antenatal classes and therefore the first face of the NCT to many parents.

## What Does The Membership Secretary Do?

The membership secretary is responsible for the administration involved in the recruitment and retention of members. With the rest of the committee she will publicise the branch and promote membership of the NCT.

She needs to:

- be enthusiastic and organised
- have a good telephone manner
- be good with parents and their children
- be knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the NCT

Duties include:

- taking calls from people interested in joining and keeping a note of the details of all callers
- following up these calls with a membership leaflet, Maternity Sales catalogue and a branch information pack
- making sure prospective members sign the official NCT membership leaflet - available from UK Office. This is a legal requirement as the NCT, as well as being a charity, is a company limited by law.
- checking the membership list supplied regularly by UK Office
- contact new members who have joined via UK Office with a welcome letter (see below)

There is, of course, administration involved and to help keep that to a minimum, the following are recommended:

- send the branch newsletter, receipt and introductory letter to new members as soon as possible after receiving their payment and completed membership application form
- send completed application forms and cheques to UK Office weekly
- keep appropriate branch volunteers informed of the details of new members so that they can be contacted and invited to branch events as soon as possible
- on receipt of UK office mailing:
- check all new members' details against details on your files, noting the membership number and if appropriate send members who have joined via UK Office a welcome letter and branch newsletter
- remove lapsed members from your files
- update files for renewed members
- on receipt of quarterly listing from UK Office, check against your files and inform the Membership team at UK Office of any omission
- collate membership numbers for the branch newsletter and give the volunteer who organises delivery of the newsletter a full list of members and their addresses
- keep up to date with membership fees and who might be entitled to reduced membership
- attend branch committee meetings and give regular membership reports

Some other tips to make the job easier:

- always keep a notebook and an up to date newsletter by your telephone
- use a large ring binder to keep together:
  - copies of all correspondence
  - membership application forms
  - branch order forms
  - membership update forms
  - membership queries forms
  - compliment slips and NCT headed paper
  - UK Office membership mailings
- keep membership details on index cards and file them in alphabetical order, with a separate box for lapsed members' details
- you may prefer a computerised system
- always have a receipt book handy. Keep all old receipt books for two years.
- keep a supply of envelopes and stamps, current newsletters and a good supply of membership forms

It is the role of the membership secretary to encourage the branch to be really proactive about membership. Encourage antenatal teachers, breastfeeding counsellors and postnatal supporters to always promote NCT membership at classes and sessions. Make sure they always take membership forms with them to meetings. Persuade the branch to have an annual recruitment drive, and contact lapsed members to see if they will rejoin. The whole committee should see increasing membership as a shared responsibility - one small thing everyone can do is to carry a few membership forms in their handbags and offer them to potential members whenever the opportunity arises.

Approach the local maternity hospital and doctors' surgeries to see if they will give out membership forms, branch information leaflets and Maternity Sales catalogues.

You could also hold regular new members' coffee mornings, every two months or so. All new members and people who have enquired about membership could be invited to attend. Put details of the coffee mornings in the branch newsletter to encourage others along - some people consider themselves new members for quite some time. Members then get to meet each other and people thinking of joining can see other NCT members for themselves. Give everyone the opportunity to ask questions and make suggestions. You could try taking along samples of NCT leaflets and booklets they might find useful. Take the opportunity of telling new members what the local branch does, and talk about nearly new sales and other fundraising events in a friendly, informal atmosphere.

Another idea is to invite new members and potential members along to a mini-introduction to the NCT. These could include an session on "what is the NCT and what can the branch offer to parents?". Being membership secretary can be fun and interesting. You get the chance to meet lots of new people and make friends in the process. You also get the satisfaction of knowing that you are directly helping the NCT to carry out its work UK wide.