

# The Branch Secretary

The branch secretary is the focal point of communication within the branch. She will be the person who receives information on behalf of the branch from all sorts of bodies, including UK Office, particularly via Update and New Digest. She must then ensure an efficient passing of information between branch members, the branch committee, neighbouring branches, regional and UK NCT. With the chair, the secretary will arrange branch, committee and Annual General meetings, the order of business, venue, times, etc. She will post out notices to members and committee members in time for each meeting.

A branch secretary needs many of the same qualities as the chair. She must be:

- very organised
- good with people
- a delegator
- decisive
- a motivator
- realistic

## What Do I Need To Do First?

Be organised - there is nothing more important. Get together with your chair to establish a pattern of work and share out the main tasks. Decide upon a filing system to keep track of what is going on. If you do not, you will get into a mess and make even more work. The better organised you are, the less you will have to do.

## How Do I Prepare For Meetings?

Together with your chair, decide on what the business is, and the main topics. Agree where, when and what time, and then (as soon as possible) send a notice to all members. It is a good idea to decide dates, times and venues for meetings at the beginning of each year and then let members have a diary notice. However, it is still important to send out a notice for each meeting.

It may be your job to take minutes at meetings - keep them short and record decisions and action points, and make sure you include who said they would do what and by when in the minutes. Minutes from previous meetings must be prepared for members to have read before the following meeting. Ideally, minutes should be sent out within two weeks of a meeting, or, failing this, sent out with the notice of the next meeting.

## Information

You can expect to receive lots of useful information for the branch - but much will need to be passed to relevant people. So:

- deal with what you receive immediately - once you have put it to one side it could be forgotten
- go through each item and separate out what is for whom
- go through New Digest and Update and ensure everyone is aware of what affects them or the branch
- if you have access to cheap or free photocopying, copy and send appropriate information to the relevant people
- pass information on promptly - if not, deadlines may be missed, or notices and information received too late
- if you notice something that needs to be dealt with urgently, telephone the relevant member immediately

## Anything Else?

draw up agendas together with the chair - be realistic about the number of items on an agenda

write up the minutes promptly, while they are still fresh in your mind  
make yourself aware of the guidelines on accessibility - see the section ACCESSIBILITY- THE KEY TO EQUALITY  
keep a list of good local venues

The branch secretary holds a very important information giving and gathering position, and works very closely with the branch chair to ensure a successful branch. If you feel you could make a contribution to this vital position, contact your branch chair or regional co-ordinator.