



Holding jobholders properly accountable at the AGM

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To avoid Co-Counsellors having to come together each day to have a mini AGM for the smallest decisions, we work with jobholders who have more or less specific job remits. The AGM delegates its authority to an individual or a group of individuals to execute a specific job, often with a specific amount of money.

Generally speaking most jobs in Co-Counselling are done in a satisfying way and with satisfying results. However, this is not always the case. When this happens, it is important to remember that the AGM has not only the right but also the obligation to its members to check whether and how the job has been accomplished, and if necessary to correct the course of action. Because of this, it is important that the AGM has ways to keep their jobholders accountable for what they are doing.

When things go wrong it is sometimes easier to turn a blind eye on the functioning of jobholders. Arguments are used like 'Job holders do their best, don't they?' 'We trusted them to do the job, so we can't complain, can we?' But this reasoning leads to a slippery slope, in which the AGM is actually not in charge of what is happening.

Keeping jobholders accountable by asking questions

The job holder is responsible for what he or she is doing in the job. The meaning of the word 'responsible' here is almost literal: the jobholder has the obligation to respond to any questions relating to his job.

The aim of questioning the job holder is first and foremost to try to get clear why the job holders did what they did and to explain what they are going to do and why. Challenging questions can and must sometimes be put forward: "You said this, but you did that. How can we understand that? What does this mean for your future actions?"

Provided with answers by the jobholder, those at the AGM can make up their minds about what to do next. This might imply reversing decisions if possible, changing policies, amending a situation which has arisen through the jobholder's decisions etc..

Questioning job holders, however is not always easy or productive. There is a risk that holding a post holder accountable in a positive and constructive way may too easily slip into a questioning of the person's motives, attitudes, personality or mental state, rather than a questioning of his or her actions. This can be experienced by the job holder as a personal attack.

Preventing personal attacks from happening In order to prevent personal attacks from happening several things need to be kept in mind. First of all it should be remembered, that it is much easier for an AGM to evaluate a decision already made, than for a job holder facing a decision to make it.

It should be remembered that the jobholder did the best they could under the circumstances at the time, whatever the AGM thinks of the results of the jobholder's efforts with the benefit of hindsight.

But most of all Job holders should be held responsible for their actual decisions and actions, not for their presumed patterns, perceived distress or mental state. It is the action that influences what is happening in the network. People with strong patterns operating might still do very valuable things for Co-Counselling. On the other hand, people with the most loving and undistressed personalities can bring huge damage to Co-Counselling because of ignorance or incompetence. Not to mention how difficult and often arbitrary it is to assess other peoples' patterns and distresses.

It is necessary that we develop a proper way of holding jobholders accountable in the AGM. My wish is that jobholders will be held accountable for what they are doing, not for who they are.