



Starting an Interact Club

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There are three stages in the formation of an Interact club:

- **Consideration** - the investigative or pre-planning stage. It consists of assessing, the potential, gathering information and stimulating interest within the Rotary Club.
- **Sponsorship** - is the organising stage which leads to the commitment of a Rotary club to the formation and continued support of its Interact club.
- **Counselling** - sees the Interact club 'up and running' with Rotary liaison officers and discreet counselling.

Consideration

An Interact club may be community or school based, and be formed by Rotary clubs on their own or in association with strategic partners who share common ideals with Rotary International.

It is best to keep the organising committee small. An *Ad Hoc* group of three interested Rotarians is ideal. These may be drawn from more than one club if there are several in the area, and they should be keen to work with young people and likely to win respect and confidence.

The **Clubs Chairman's Handbook** contains much useful information on forming Interact clubs. *The best knowledge of all, however, is that gained by visiting an Interact club, and talking to the Interactors in person.* In this way you will begin to understand the aims and structure of an Interact club, and the sort of young people for whom it caters. It is advisable to keep your Club President and President Elect informed at all times during this phase.

Decision

Having completed the Consideration stage, the team should then submit its recommendations to the Rotary Club council for a decision to be made concerning sponsorship. Only if that decision is favourable do the next stages apply.

Sponsorship - five steps

Allow 4 weeks for obtaining suggestions for potential members and a further 2 weeks for issuing invitations to an **Interest meeting (1)**.

- Names and addresses will be obtained from schools, training schemes such as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, strategic partners, Rotaract, friends and Rotarians where the age gap is not too wide. An attractive poster on a school notice board has been successful.

An **Organisation meeting (2)** should be held a week after the Interest meeting and the completed form sent to the District Governor. Information on this and subsequent meetings will be found in the *Club Chairman's Handbook*. You will now have an **Interim club**. The first **Council meeting (3)** of the Interim club takes place a week later, followed by the **first meeting (4)** of the club a week after that (i.e.: two weeks after the Organisation meeting). Thereafter fortnightly. The final step will be to organise the **Charter meeting (5)** which usually takes place 3 to 6

months later. An early fixing of the date will ensure all the VIP's are able to come and the Charter Certificate is received from RIBI.

Membership and venues

The new club meeting place is very important, and should be investigated early.

If the club is to be school based, consultation with the headteacher will already have taken place and meeting times and a venue agreed. The overall responsibility belongs to the sponsor Rotary club(s) although the head retains complete control of all matters involving school policies.

A school based counsellor to hold a watching brief is desirable where this occurs it may not be necessary for a Rotarian to be present at all times as they must be with a community based club. A community based Interact club may draw members from schools within the territorial limits of the sponsoring Rotary club(s).

A list of likely members will have been compiled during the consideration stage and these should be invited to the Interest meeting with their friends and brothers-sisters. Invitations will come from the Rotary club Interact chairman or the Rotary club president. Since we are dealing with minors, it would be prudent to send letters to the parents of potential Interact members, inviting them to the Interest meeting, with the idea of enlisting their support to encourage the full and active participation of their sons and daughters in the activities of the new club. A draft letter is included in the "Starter Pack".

The organisation list

This has been referred to overleaf as the second of five steps taken in the formation of an Interact Club. A form is provided for you in the Interact Handbook and replicates can be made since they are required for RIBI, original and one copy (both signed by the DG) at Alcester, in addition to a copy for the club and the District Youth Activities Chairman responsible for Interact should he ask for one. It is important to invite/brief your club PRO to attend the Organisation meeting to prepare a press release along the lines suggested in the Interact Handbook.

Counselling

The success of your Interact Club depends in part on the guidance provided by the sponsoring Rotary club(s). To operate a strong effective service club these young people will need support and the sponsor clubs have promised to provide it. *This can be a weak link in the programme, far too often clubs leave it to an individual Rotarian and when he retires from the post there is no one to take it on. This is why a small committee is essential, drawn from more than one Rotary club if possible.*

Succeeding Presidents should continue to maintain an active Interact Committee whose Convenor, should report to the Club Council.

Remember: Interact is a program of RI not a Project to be taken up or dropped at will.

It is on the commitment to our programs that our reputation has been built.

It is often asked what do the Rotarian Counsellors (some prefer the terms Advisor or Liaison Officer) have to do? The simple answer lies in our 1995-96 theme "Be a Friend". Being a friend to an Interact club means:-

- Attending their meetings and taking an interest in what they do.
- Listening and advising, where necessary, but not taking over.
- Making recommendations concerning activities and service projects.
- Ensuring funds are raised and properly managed.
- Advising on important club meetings and seeing that details of new officers are given to the District Interact Committee.
- Suggesting a simple "Hand Over" ceremony at the appropriate time arranging for Leaving Certificates Membership cards etc.
- Maintaining a link with the sponsoring clubs and Strategic partners and ensuring Interact involvement in at least one Rotary event during each year.
- Keeping an eye on membership and identifying future club officers.

There are but a few of the areas where a Rotary advisor can become a trusted friend of an Interact Club.

Changing membership

There is often of loss of members at 16 years of age. This may be due to some Interactors leaving school to take up employment, or going on to higher education. Close attention is needed to redress this loss if membership is to be retained. This is possibly the area where the Advisor can actually save the club. He or she will see the vital signs and recommend prompt action. If there is not already an active recruitment policy in place, **it is advised that such a policy be adopted shortly after a club has been formed.** Considerable success has also been reported from clubs which hold an annual Interest meeting in September or October. If you lose an Interactor be optimistic and put him or her in touch with **ROTARACT.**

Contact for further information

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