

Nights Away Permit Scheme - Commissioners' Guide



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Introduction

This factsheet provides a guide to Commissioners on their role within the Nights Away Permit Scheme. It should be read in conjunction with Policy, Organisation and Rules (POR) of The Scout Association. More detailed information on the scheme, for Nights Away Advisers and for applicants can be found in separate factsheets.

The Nights Away Permit Scheme

The Nights Away Permit Scheme promotes quality residential and camping experiences. It allows adults who have demonstrated their skill and knowledge to take young people away on nights away events. It also supports and encourages adults to acquire and improve the skills required to provide residential experiences.

The Commissioner's Role

It is your role as the responsible Commissioner to issue any nights away permits. No other role; Nights Away Adviser, Assistant Commissioner, can grant a permit, although they can all provide support to you. It is also not possible to grant or renew a permit without a recommendation from a Nights Away Adviser (see FS120804 Nights Away Permit Scheme – Nights Away Advisers).

The Nights Away Permit Scheme is a national scheme, so any permit you grant can be used with young people from other parts of the country, and anyone with a permit from elsewhere in the country can use it with young people from your County or District.

Please do not implement local rules in relation to the permit scheme. These are unneeded, provide extra barriers to young people being able to take

part in residential experiences and may lead to confusion and frustration.

Granting A Permit

If someone wishes you to grant them a permit they should come to you with a recommendation from a Nights Away Adviser. When this happens there are a number of steps you need to take:

- 1 Check The Nights Away Adviser's Recommendation** – This will be based on the applicant's technical competence and experience. You may not grant a permit that is less restrictive than this recommendation. Always check who the Nights Away Adviser is. If it not someone you know as being an Nights Away Adviser then you should contact them or their County/District to check that they are in a position to be able to carry out assessments.
- 2 Check Knowledge Of The Scout Association Rules** – You will need to check that the applicant is aware of the general and nights away specific Scout Association Rules and how these affect them. It might be that you use a specialist to check this such as the Nights Away Adviser, and further support can generally be found from the ACC Activities.
- 3 Check Child Protection Issues** – Check that the applicant has undertaken the necessary Personal Enquiry checks and received the appropriate child protection training. This is especially important where applicants do not already hold an appointment.
- 4 Check Applicant's Personal Suitability** – This is a check on the applicant's attitude to run the activity for young people. It is not the same as their personal suitability to hold an appointment as

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they will be in a different environment with different responsibilities. If you do not know the applicant well yourself it can be useful to consult with people who do know them well such as their GSL.

5 Grant The Permit – This should be to a level no higher than the recommendation received from the Nights Away Adviser. It can be tailored to the skills, experience and requirements of the individual as much as is deemed appropriate, but you should be prepared to explain the reasons for any restrictions, and how they could gain a less restrictive permit in the future. You will also need to state an expiry date for the permit, up to a maximum of five years from the issue date. Again, if you decide there are reasons to issue a shorter term permit you should be prepared to explain the reasons for this to the applicant. When an applicant's permit expires they will need to apply for a new one following the same process, so it might be useful to remind permit holders a few months before their permits expire.

6 Issue A Permit Card – These are available from the Scout Information Centre and come with a self-sealing plastic wallet. The space for a reference number is for local use so it is up to you what type of referencing system you use if you use one.

7 Record The Permit On The Membership Services Database – As this is a national scheme it is important that there are national records held on who holds a permit. This also allows Counties etc to see what permit holders there are in their area, and allows Headquarters to easily contact them with updates etc should the need arise.

Permits are not section specific and Districts and Counties / Areas must not operate a policy of issuing only section specific permits. It is recognised that for some individuals a restriction to this effect may be appropriate. However consideration must be made on how this will affect the use of Young Leaders or other young people on the residential experience.

Notification

Having a permit does not override the need for all activities to have the (usually informal) approval of the responsible Commissioner, and in the case of nights away events this is done through the Nights Away Notification Form (NAN). Before any nights away event takes place the permit holder should send you all the details that can be found on Form NAN, whether this is through email, hard copy, text message, phone call – whatever system works most efficiently for you. In addition when groups from other Districts visit your District for a nights away event they will send this information to you as the host DC unless they are staying at a Scout owned site.

As Commissioner it is you that gives approval for events to take place, not campsite wardens or managers, so please don't leave this for others to do.

Support

If you are unsure of anything to do with the permit scheme then support should be available. Many Counties have a local support structure for Activities headed up by an ACC Activities who would usually be the first point of contact for any activity queries. In addition to this there is support available from the National Activities Team through the Scout Information Centre at Gilwell Park.

If in doubt, please ask.

Useful Links

[FS120800](#) Nights Away Permit Scheme