

# Guidance on the formal suspension of youth members



Item Code FS140101 Jan 07 Edition no 1

0845 300 1818

This Factsheet provides guidance on the formal suspension of youth members in Scouting. Where a youth member is also an adult member, as may be the case for some members of the Scout Network, the rules set out in Chapter 15 of Policy, Organisation & Rules relating to the suspension of adult membership must be followed.

This guidance also only deals with the formal suspension of young people following serious allegations or incidents. Formal suspension must not be used as a disciplinary sanction for young people. However, it is recognised that in some situations, temporary exclusion of a young person from Scouting activities for a short, fixed period might be appropriate.

## When suspension may be appropriate:

Formal suspension of a youth member may be appropriate in the following situations:

- Where they have been accused of a serious criminal offence.

Examples would include, serious criminal activity such as actual or grievous bodily harm, arson, burglary, supplying drugs or child abuse. In this case the youth member must be suspended until police enquiries and any legal proceedings have been concluded.

- Where they have been accused of actions or offences that put adults or young people at serious risk of harm.

Examples would include, deliberate dangerous behaviour on activities.

In either of these situations the District Commissioner must immediately take steps to

ensure that no Scouting situation arises which could cause further concern and that no one is placed in a position which could cause further harm. To this end suspension may be necessary.

## What suspension means:

Young people that have been suspended should not participate in any activity connected with Scouting. They should not attend meetings or events of any kind and may not wear the uniform or badges.

Suspension does not indicate guilt but ensures that no situation can arise that may cause further concern and allows a period where further information may be received and if appropriate the statutory agencies (typically the Police or Social Services) may carry out their duties.

## The decision:

The District Commissioner is the most appropriate person to suspend a young person, however wherever possible they should act in consultation with the Group Scout Leader / Explorer Scout Leader.

District Commissioners should consult with their County/Area Commissioner and must inform the relevant Field Development Officer, or Scotland / Northern Ireland HQ or in Wales the relevant Field Commissioner, before suspending a young person.

Where any statutory agency is involved in the matter, advice must be sought from that agency via the relevant Field Development Officer, Scotland / Northern Ireland HQ or in Wales the

## The Scout Information Centre

Gilwell Park Chingford London E4 7QW Tel + 44 (0)20 8433 7100 Fax + 44 (0)20 8433 7103 email [info.centre@scout.org.uk](mailto:info.centre@scout.org.uk) [www.scoutbase.org.uk](http://www.scoutbase.org.uk)

relevant Field Commissioner, before taking any action.

**The procedure:**

The parents / carers of the young person concerned must be notified in writing of the decision to suspend, together with the reasons for reaching that decision. In addition a copy of the information sheet “Notes for the parents / carers of a young person under suspension” (Available from the relevant Field Development Officer, or Scotland / Northern Ireland HQ or in Wales the relevant Field Commissioner) must be provided to the parents / carers.

In most cases it will be important for the young person to understand the reasons for suspension and the District Commissioner must attempt to ensure that reasons for suspension are explained to them.

The District Commissioner must appoint someone to provide support as well as contact and liaison between the young person / their parents / carers and the District for the period of the suspension. The information sheet “Supporting a young person under suspension” (Available from the relevant Field Development Officer, or Scotland / Northern Ireland HQ or in Wales the relevant Field Commissioner) should be given to the person undertaking the supporter’s role.

**Ending a period of suspension:**

At the end of the suspension period the District Commissioner and Group Scout Leader must determine if a return to Scouting is appropriate.

Where a statutory agency has been involved in the matter, advice must be sought from that agency via the relevant Field Development Officer, or Scotland / Northern Ireland HQ or in Wales the relevant Field Commissioner.

In all cases it is recommended that advice be sought from the relevant Field Development Officer, Country HQ or Field Commissioner.

Possible outcomes following a period of suspension would include:

- Reinstatement
- Reinstatement with conditions

Examples of conditions might include the transfer to an alternative Group, Unit or Section, the provision of additional adult support or supervision or the exclusion from particular activities.

- Dismissal

The dismissal of a young person (whether following a suspension or not) must follow Rules 15.9 – 15.16 of Policy, Organisation & Rules.