

Nights away for Scouts with special needs



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Nights away form an important part of the Scouting experience and all sections are required to offer at least one night away each year for their young people. Wherever possible, this opportunity should also be available to young people with special needs to ensure that Scouting is accessible to all. This factsheet will aid in the planning of such an event.

The proposed camp, holiday, expedition or sleepover should be discussed fully with the young people, and where appropriate their parents, early in the planning stage. This will identify any concerns or special requirements and will enable the leader to resolve them before they become problems.

Typically these may be due to the venue, the cost, anxieties relating to being away from parents or carers or changes in environment or routine. Where a young person is dependent upon their parents or carers for support for their particular needs, this will require additional understanding from the leaders.

To assist in the preparation it will be helpful to draw up a checklist to make sure all the jobs are done. Included in this factsheet are some points you may wish to add to your checklist.

Five key elements of the event will be the venue, how to get there, what to do while there, what to eat, and how much will it cost. Some issues for consideration are:

1. Where to stay?

- Is the venue (including accommodation, facilities, terrain) suitable for all the young people attending?

- Are the toilet facilities adequate and accessible? For more information read the toilet facilities section on p.80 of [Nights Away](#)
- If needed, is a refrigerator available for the storage of medicines or to keep food items separate?
- Think about the environment: changes to noise and light levels can increase anxiety for some with Autism and sensory issues. Is there a noisy motorway or airport close to your camp? Will the camp be busy with other young people?

2. How to get there?

- Are you using your own transport?
- Are you hiring transport?
- Do you need special transport, for example a minibus with a tail lift?
- Is there adequate parking space?
- Can you get direct access to the building or campsite?
- If you are using public transport to get to a camp, have you made sure there is easy access and followed the operator's guidelines?

3. What to do when you're there?

- Are the facilities and activities suitable for all the young people – can adaptations be made?
- Have you special programmes for extremes of weather condition, i.e. not just wet and dry, but very cold and very hot.
- A timetable of events can be very reassuring for some young people, especially those with Autism or Aspergers. A visual timetable with simple

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pictures or photos can help those with Dyslexia or processing issues.

4. What to eat?

It is essential not only to have a balanced menu for the event but also to ensure that any special diets, whether for medical reasons, religious reasons, or because of particular likes or dislikes, are allowed for.

- Are there facilities for the storage and preparation of food in line with religious or cultural guidelines?
- Do you have access to equipment to provide special diets, e.g. for people who require pureed food
- Can you involve the parents or carers of young people on special diets? Their knowledge of alternatives can be invaluable, both for menu planning and budget

5. What will it cost?

Will the cost of the event place a particular burden on the young people and their parents? If so, should special support be given by additional fundraising? Special support needs to be handled sensitively so that those receiving support do not feel they are accepting a charity hand out.

Have you considered the additional cost of extra adults to provide the level of care required?

There are some grant funds available from Headquarters that might be able to cover some of the costs of the camp and the cost of providing additional adult support. Visit www.scouts.org.uk/grants for more information.

Who's coming?

To these five elements there is a sixth and equally important part - the leader should know the young people who will be attending, to recognise and accept the special support that each may need - whether this be emotional, physical or in other areas. By knowing the young people well you will build up knowledge of their usual behaviours and patterns and will be able to detect signs and symptoms of anxiety or illness if they should arise.

Routines at camp are often different to those on a meeting night – speak to the young person and their parents/carers about their usual routine, sleeping pattern, personal care etc to get an idea of how this might translate to being at camp and to see if there are any hints, tips or aids used at home that can be brought to camp. It might also be useful for the parents to know how the routine at camp might differ from that at home.

Points to consider

Do any of the young people require special support or help? For instance, with medication or care support (dressing or feeding or with toileting etc.).

Detailed advice on personal care issues, such as medical care or bedwetting, may be found on the Member resources pages of scouts.org.uk. In addition to the standard health form, supplementary information may be necessary so that the leader in charge is fully aware of the degree of help needed, and can brief other helpers as appropriate.

Where medication is required it is essential to be aware of what is taken, why, and in some cases what to do if the young person becomes ill - for example a severe asthma attack, or illness in a diabetic. There are factsheets covering many impairments that provide more detailed information about the things that you will have to consider. It is also important to consider the appropriate storage of medications; some may need to be refrigerated, whilst others may need to be locked securely away. It is helpful to ask the parents to provide the medication in the original packaging complete with the pharmacy label detailing the dosage and times to be administered. Making a note of who administered what medication and at what time will be useful in case medical treatment is needed.

If you have a young person with learning difficulties or sensory issues be aware that their anxiety may be heightened in the run up to an event as well as the event itself. Some young people may need reassurance before an event and time by themselves in a calm, quiet location during your event. They may already have a

routine and a way to communicate this need which parents / carers will need to explain to you.

Behaviour which seems out of character or extreme may be a sign of anxiety, and not a test of your leadership or patience. Your knowledge of the young people attending is invaluable and by acting on signs of anxiety early it is possible to avert more serious distress.

If a wheelchair is used, there is the possibility it may get a puncture over rough ground - a bicycle puncture repair kit will solve this. If it is an electric chair, have arrangements been made for recharging the battery? Are you familiar with how the wheelchair folds up when transported? It might be useful to ask the parents for the contact details they have for their wheelchair services department in case you run into any difficulties.

The more frequently used buildings should have wide doorways, no tight corners and level flooring.

If a young person has a Blue Disabled Parking Badge they should be encouraged to take it to camp, it may be useful for trips out from camp although you should remember that only the holder of the blue badge is entitled to use it.

It is useful to have a supply of spare clothes such as socks, track suits, pullovers etc. which can be used by those who come with insufficient kit, or who feel the cold badly, or those who have an accident and run out of their own kit. This includes spare sleeping bags, blankets and roll mats.

Illness at camp

Some of the common problems and issues that crop up at any residential event, including homesickness and bedwetting, are in chapter 6: Health, happiness and safety of the [Nights Away](#) resource. There are also separate factsheets covering more specific needs, which can be found at scouts.org.uk.

A frequent type of illness that can strike when young people are away from home is that of an upset stomach. This may be a sign of anxiety or homesickness, but at the worst it can be a sign of a genuine illness and can sometimes result in cases of diarrhoea and sickness which have the

potential to spread to all in camp. You will need to be prepared for this eventuality. An attempt to gain your attention with no obvious symptoms may only need a small amount of compassion to resolve, this display of anxiety is not uncommon and easily resolved.

Any sudden illness should be treated seriously, and if in doubt, medical advice should be sought. Whilst parents and carers might be grateful of the respite whilst on camp if you have any questions or doubts do not hesitate to call them to check if you are unsure at any time.

Sleepwalking or night terrors can be distressing and frightening to others as well as the sufferer. Here are some practical hints for dealing with these situations

- Try to find out if anything in particular is a trigger, e.g. too much or too little light
- Find out what happens at home to manage the situation
- Provide all leaders with background information
- Provide a safe sleeping environment. e.g. ensure leaders' accommodation is at a distance where they can hear and can deal with the problem

If those attending the event are taking part in water activities, particularly in stagnant or slow moving water, it is advisable to shower or wash thoroughly afterwards. Some water, including streams, pools, ponds and rivers, may be contaminated by Weil's disease. Should anyone who has taken part in water activities become ill, the GP involved should be informed of the activity to aid diagnosis. It may be necessary to take steps to cover and dress open wounds or stomas for example, whether the water is slow moving or not.

Most young people will have had tetanus injections, but will often not remember when they last had a "booster". It is probably best to receive a "booster" if a penetrating injury takes place, even if immunisation is up to date.

Checklist

- One or more spare sleeping bags are useful in case of bedwetting, accidents or a leaky tent
- Spare clothes such as tracksuits, warm socks or jumpers can be useful
- Materials to construct a shelter in case of extreme heat
- Do any of the young people need to use an airbed or camp bed?
- If taking a wheelchair, take a puncture kit and some tools to carry out simple maintenance
- If taking electric wheelchairs - is there somewhere to charge the battery? Will it cope with the expected conditions at the activity? If not, take a manual chair as well
- Do any of the young people take medication? If so, what is it for? Must it be taken at set times? Who is responsible for making sure this is done?
- How secure is the storage facility for medication. Remember it should be kept in a locked storage container
- Is a fridge needed to store medication?
- If a young person has a tendency for bedwetting, reduce the fluid intake at bedtime
- If any particular medical requirements are identified, make sure that at least two leaders or helpers are capable of supporting them
- Are there any special diets that need to be catered for?
- Are there any sensory issues that need to be catered for?
- Do any emotional requirements need support, such as setting a quiet place aside?
- If a young person needs attention during the night, for example to take medication, make sure a rota is drawn up to deal with it, and provide an alarm clock for the person on duty
- Ensure that the [In Touch](#) system is easily accessible and the whereabouts known to all leaders, in case of the need to make contact

Remember that everything in Scouting should be accessible to all, so ask if you have questions and most importantly remember to have fun whilst you are away.

Further Information and Resources

Contact:

Diversity.inclusion@scouts.org.uk

The Scout Association resources

- Scouts.org.uk – Scouting for all pages of Member Resources
- Nights Away: The essential guide to running Scouting residential experiences.
- For information about Headquarters funds, visit www.scouts.org.uk/grants

Other Resources

- For rules about the use of a blue badge, contact the Department for Transport:

Department for Transport

Zone 4/23
Great Minster House
76 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DR
Telephone: 020 7944 2914
Minicom: 020 7944 3277
Fax: 020 7944 6102
Email: blue.badge@dft.gsi.gov.uk
Website: www.dft.gov.uk/bluebadge

- **Contact a Family** provide advice, resources and signposting to further information on all disabilities and medical conditions:

209-211 City Road,
London
EC1V 1JN
Helpline 0808 808 3555
Fax: 020 7608 8701
Email: info@cafamily.org.uk
Website: www.cafamily.org.uk

- The **Scout Holiday Homes Trust** has a network of accessible holiday accommodation throughout Great Britain.

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