

# DC Guidelines – Age Ranges Flexibility (Special Needs)



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## Section Age Ranges

There is considerable flexibility of age ranges at the discretion of the Section Leader:

| Section       | Core Age                         | Flexibility   |
|---------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Beavers       | 6 to 8 years old                 | From 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ and up to 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ years old.   |
| Cubs          | 8 to 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ years old  | Up to 11 years old.   |
| Scouts        | 10 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 14 years old | Up to 15 years old.   |
| Explorers     | 14 to 18 years old               | From 13 $\frac{1}{2}$ and up to 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ .  |
| Scout Network | 18 to 25 years old               | From 17 $\frac{1}{2}$ . Members cease to be a member of the Scout Network on their 25 <sup>th</sup> birthday, and should be encouraged to take on a new role in Scouting, such as joining a Scout Fellowship. |

Unless there is good reason, such as completing an Award, or keeping friendship groups together, Scouts should be encouraged to move into the next Section at or near to the core age for that Section. The Programme and Awards for each Section have been designed with these core ages in mind, and have been designed primarily for participation and involvement. It is much more about young people having a go, rather than passing tests or achieving a particular standard. It can therefore be an enjoyable and rewarding experience for any young person whatever their ability.

## Further Flexibility

However there may be occasions when it will be appropriate to extend this flexibility. It is essential that where further flexibility is required it should only be implemented after relevant consideration and obtaining the appropriate approval. **In all cases, the best interest of the young person should be of paramount importance.**

The following guidelines are to provide support for Leaders and Commissioners when dealing with young people with specific needs as it involves the appropriate Assistant County/Area Commissioner for Special Needs at an early stage and requires a formal review on a regular basis.

Flexibility outside the published age ranges in Sections is available for those with specific needs and the rules, for individual members and Special Groups are as follows.

### Individual members

When necessary, the District Commissioner may permit a young person to be in a Section outside of the normal age range, due to a young person's specific needs, on the recommendation of the ACC/AAC or Adviser for Special Needs. This permission should be logged on a simple form and be subject to annual review.

District Commissioners will need to ensure that Members and Scout Groups within their District are aware of this flexibility. A request to use this flexibility to meet the needs of an individual should be made in time for the necessary consultation to take place, before a decision has to be reached. The permission given by District Commissioners should be based on the intellectual ability or physical needs of the young person concerned,

along with the needs of the other young people in the Section.

The decision will be taken at the discretion of the District Commissioner on the recommendation of the ACC/AAC Special Needs (or the County/Area Adviser or representative), following the considered proposal of the Section Leader and Group Scout Leader of the Group concerned.

It would be good practice, where possible, for the District Commissioner and possibly the ACC/AAC/Adviser (Special Needs) to meet the young person concerned, and their parents or guardians, as part of any consultation. In any situation, as much information as possible should be supplied to those involved in the decision making process. A suggested form for this procedure is attached but Districts may wish to produce their own forms for the agreement.

Once a decision has been made, the DC should advise the Group and Section Leader using the form and stating the date of the agreed review date. The permission should be for a fixed timescale requiring renewal on at a maximum, an annual basis; it is not considered likely that an extension beyond a year would be appropriate except in exceptional circumstances.

### **Special Groups**

The District Commissioner may on the recommendation of the ACC/AAC (Special Needs) (or Adviser) authorise operation outside of the standard age ranges for Scout Groups where all the Members have special needs, or are in a hospital Scout Group. It is good practice to ensure that any one grouping does not span more than six years in the 6-14 age range and more than ten years in the 14-25 age range. This permission should be logged on a simple form.

District Commissioners should be proactive in ensuring the rule relating to Special Groups is followed within their Districts.

Many of these Groups will be affiliated to a special school, hospital or residential home. The Members will be drawn from these sources and the age range of Members will reflect that of the

organisation concerned. In all cases it is important to consider the most suitable range of age for the Members concerned to enjoy their Scouting. When taking part in District or County activities, participation should be Section-based, determined both by the age and capability of the members.

If the Group have members with profound disabilities requiring considerable extra support, it may be that the provision for Explorer Scouts and Scout Network might best be within the level of support able to be provided by the Group. This provision will need to be discussed with the District for Explorers and County for Scout Network. It would be likely in the case of Explorers Scouts that it would be a District unit operating within the Group and taking part in District activities wherever appropriate.

The District Commissioner and the ACC/AAC Special Needs should visit the Group to discuss the circumstances prior to making an informed decision. It will be good practice for the District Commissioner and the ACC/AAC (Special Needs) to make regular visits to the Group to provide any support that may be required.

A suggested form for this procedure is attached but Districts may wish to produce their own forms for the agreement. Once a decision has been made, the DC should advise the Group using the form. The permission need only be reviewed if there is a substantive change in circumstances of the Group.

## District Permission Form For Age Range Flexibility - Individual Member

This form is for each Member, who due to their specific needs, is permitted to be in a Section outside of the normal age range

The form should be completed by the District Commissioner and will need to be reviewed after the fixed time-scale and not extended, except in exceptional circumstances beyond a year.

The original form should be retained by the District, and a copy given to the Group

**Name of Member:**

**Date of Birth:**

**Group:**

**Section:**

**Reason** (main consideration only):

**Signature of Group Scout Leader**

**Date**

**Recommendation of ACC/AAC Special Needs**  
(if no ACC County Special Needs representative)

**Date**

**Signature of District Commissioner**

**Date**

**Review Date:**

## District Permission Form For Age Range Flexibility - Special Groups

This form is for Scout Groups where all Members have special needs or are in Hospital Scout Groups, and who have been authorised operation outside of the standard age ranges.

The form should be completed by the District Commissioner. It will only need to be reviewed if there is a substantive change in the Group's circumstances.

The original form should be retained by the District, and a copy given to the Group

### Name Of Group:

|                            |                 |        |                |
|----------------------------|-----------------|--------|----------------|
| <b>Sections Operating:</b> | Beavers         | Yes/No | Age Range..... |
|                            | Cubs            | Yes/No | Age Range..... |
|                            | Scouts          | Yes/No | Age Range..... |
|                            | Explorer Scouts | Yes/No | Age Range..... |
|                            | Scout Network   | Yes/No | Age Range..... |

**Reason** (main consideration only):

**Signature of Group Scout Leader**

**Date**

**Recommendation of ACC/AAC Special Needs**  
(if no ACC County Special Needs representative)

**Date**

**Signature of District Commissioner**

**Date**