

Successfully Including Scouts With Special Needs



Item Code FS250061 April 2007 Edition no 1

0845 300 1818

To replace FS250057 Successfully Integrating
Scouts With Special Needs

Many prospective Members have particular needs and obviously the more information a Leader Team has, the better the experience that can be offered. Generally by following some simple steps most young people can participate in Scouting activities with preparation and planning.

The majority of those with Special Needs are included in regular Scouting activities following an initial information-sharing meeting with parents. This would include essential information such as how to use an inhaler or Epipen or Anapen or what to do in certain situations. There are, however, those with more specific, specialised needs for whom inclusion needs more careful discussion and preparation. This factsheet is written with these potential Members in mind.

Information first

A Section's leadership team needs to obtain basic information about all young people before they join. Besides the more obvious details of: date of birth, parents/carers address, phone number, school attended and so on, the team needs to know whether the young person has any Special Needs which will have to be met.

This may range from a general appreciation of what the young person can or can't do, to the far more detailed information required for a Scout with a serious medical condition. Such information will include details about medication, eating, toileting, communicating, mobility, lifting and handling and knowledge of the procedures that are familiar to the young person.

It may be that the young person will require some individual support during the meeting to enable them to participate fully. A greater level of support may be required for outdoor activities, events and camps or other residential experiences.

Many young people with disabilities attend specialist schools some distance away from their homes. They often lack peer contacts in their neighbourhood. You may be approached by their parents or teachers or want to approach a local Special School yourselves to explore the possibilities of including such young people in Scouting activities within your Group.

It is good practice to ask the parents or carers of a potential Member to complete a membership form before the young person joins the Section. (Such membership forms are generally produced locally, to suit the needs of each Group – but an example is included in Appendix 1.) The form requests details of any Special Needs that the young person may have. Leaders need to be mindful that some parents may not wish to disclose that their child has any disability for fear that this may further disadvantage them.

Arranging a meeting with parents or carers when the interest is first voiced is important. This is a good way to begin to get to know families and to build a level of trust. Families in turn begin to understand something of the opportunities available to their child through Scouting. It also allows the Leader to emphasise the importance of knowing the details of an individual's Special Needs and making sure that the best possible experience can be offered. Talking about why the information is important overcomes some of the fears.

Where a child will require particular support, the meeting with parents or carers becomes essential. The Section Leader and/or a specified Leader who will have prime responsibility for the Member should undertake these visits and keep the information up to date. Frequent contact is essential and a meeting should take place at least once a year. Many Groups now specify that all the personal information held must be updated annually.

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 www.scoutbase.org.uk

What sort of information should I ask for?

This will depend on the nature of the young person's needs. It is certainly worthwhile reading the appropriate factsheets or visiting the recommended website first. This will help you to prepare some questions. Some examples of what you might need to know are listed below.

... To find out the needs of a ten year old boy with a behaviour disorder:

- What are some of the things that trigger unacceptable behaviour in your child?
- What things have you done at home to discourage any anti-social or other difficult behaviour?
- Are there any situations where your child will find it difficult to cope and which we should avoid (such as reading in front of others)?
- What methods have worked well at school to cope with his behaviour?
- What medication is taken, and how often?
- Are there any special considerations we need to be aware of when we take your Cub Scout to camp, outing or Pack Holiday?
- Does he require any additional rest periods?

... For an eight year old girl with mobility difficulties:

- What is the cause of the mobility disability?
- Can your daughter cope without a wheel chair? If so, for how far/ long?
- Does she require assistance with toileting?
- What types of wheel chairs does she have access to?
- Do you foresee any particular problems with our meeting place, which we may not have considered?
- Are there any special things the other Cub Scouts should or shouldn't do to help?
- Will she require special transport arrangements when going to camps or other outings?

What Next?

Having discussed the young person's needs with their parents or carers and having thought about the implications, it is time to make a decision. Is your Section able to provide a flexible and creative programme for the young person that can be balanced with the needs of the other Scouts in the Section? This is not a decision that you should take alone. It is important and necessary to

discuss the situation with other members of your leadership team and members of your Group Executive. There will be someone locally, a Special Needs Adviser at District or County/Area level for example, who can also offer advice to you.

You will also need to discuss the matter with the other Leaders in your Group – they will need to support your decision as hopefully the young person will progress through the Sections within your Group and they will need to be thinking ahead for the time when they will need to make provision in their own Section.

If your meeting venue is not suitable, there may well be grants available to help you make the necessary modifications. The local authority may have grants available. Alternatively, The Scout Association's Treloar Fund may be able to offer financial help.

If you feel your leadership team is under-strength, there may well be parents or carers willing to come and support the young person. Some support organisations have 'buddy' schemes and may be able to link a volunteer with the young person to support them at Section meetings. If you feel you really cannot provide what you believe a young person needs, there may be another Group in your area that is better equipped to cope. Discuss the situation with your District Commissioner and local Special Needs Adviser.

If you are able to welcome the Scout into your Section, it is important to start planning the activities appropriate to their age right away. You will need to take into account the appropriate communication methods, attention span, and physical and personal needs of the Member. Again, your local Special Needs Adviser should be available to give you ongoing support and advice.

Whatever the Group's decision, you need to advise the family of the outcome as soon as possible. Sometimes the severity of a young person's disability or their geographical situation will mean that they will experience most of their Scouting in a Special Group. It is important that these Groups are full participants in the life of their District and County.

Additional information could be obtained from the young person's school and /or other youth group leaders. In the interests of confidentiality however, permission must always be sought in writing from the child's parents or carers before making any approach.

As a young person moves from one Section to the next, it is essential to pass on their details including information about any Special Needs. Be aware however that while a Special Need may go almost unnoticed in a short Beaver Scout meeting, it may start to present more of a challenge as the young person gets older and the opportunities in the Programme increase. By the same token, as a young person becomes more familiar with his or her disability, they may well begin to cope better with it and be able to recognise what they can and can't do.

Safeguarding Members

The Scout Association's Child Protection Policy

It is the Policy of The Scout Association to safeguard the welfare of all Members by protecting them from physical, sexual and emotional harm.

The Scout Association's Young People First requirements must be strictly followed by all Leaders, Section Assistants, Instructors and those in contact with young people at all times. It is therefore essential that all Adults in Scouting are aware of Child Protection issues and the rights of all individuals - whether child or adult - to privacy and dignity.

The Young People First (Code of Good Practice for adults in Scouting) is printed on a pocket sized yellow card. This card setting out The Scout Association's Child Protection Policy is relevant and appropriate to young people with Special Needs. It is available on request from the Scout Information Centre (0845 300 1818). Any concerns on this subject should be discussed with the County/ Area Child Protection Co-ordinator.

Some personal care issues

Some Scouts with particular physical or learning disabilities may at times require support of a personal nature. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and written consent of parents or carers. In an emergency, where this type of help is required, the parents/ carers should be fully informed as soon as possible.

It is important to ensure that those undertaking personal care are sensitive to the individual and carry out tasks with the utmost discretion. Leaders should ensure that the Scout is given privacy and treated with dignity when tasks of a personal or intimate nature are being carried out. Someone who is inexperienced must not undertake this kind

of assistance. Keep a record of any personal care tasks that are undertaken.

Parents/ carers are responsible for keeping Leaders updated with this information. They can also best advise on how to undertake the personal care. Members of the Leadership team should be aware of these guidelines and obtain the prior written approval regarding the level of personal care and in what circumstances it can be given.

The Leader in charge should only administer medication under the strict written instructions from the parents/ carers. This responsibility may however be delegated to another Leader or Assistant who has the appropriate expertise. All medication should be stored safely and correctly and a record kept of anything administered.

Safeguarding Leaders

All members of the leadership team must be aware of all relevant Child Protection issues. They must also fully understand the rights of individuals - child or adult - to privacy and dignity.

Leaders can do much to minimise any accusations of inappropriate behaviour if the Code of Good Practice as outlined on the yellow card is followed. In unavoidable circumstances, where an adult is alone with a young person, make sure that another member of your leadership team and the parents/ carers are made aware and kept informed.

The Key Leader/ Assistant Principle

It may be helpful to allocate a Leader or Section Assistant to build a closer relationship with the young person, and to help gain knowledge and understanding of their particular needs. They are then responsible for updating information and keeping the other Members informed about the needs of the individual. In this instance in particular, compliance with The Scout Association's Young People First requirements is paramount.

Insurance cover

The Scout Association's Insurance Policy covers all Scouting activities including caring for Members with Special Needs. This includes administering of medicine and the intimate personal care of Members. Accordingly, Leaders are fully protected in all aspects of dealing with Members with Special Needs providing they are complying with the Association's *Policy, Organisation and Rules* and Child Protection Policies. If more details are required, Leaders can

contact Scout Insurance Services (01903 768 524).

Where can I find the support I need?

Having someone who you can turn to for help, advice and training will make running your programme and managing a disability much easier. In this final section we look at some of the people who can help.

Young Leaders

A Young Leader is another way of being an Explorer Scout. The Young Leader Scheme gives those aged 14 – 18 the opportunity to work as part of the leadership team in the Beaver Scout, Cub Scout or Scout Sections. To help them gain the most from the experience there are a series of training modules. Two of these modules (*Kids Behaving Badly* and *Special People*) are particularly relevant for Young Leaders working with Scouts with Special Needs.

Young Leaders will need help and support from other members of the leadership team, when working with Special Needs. It is not normally appropriate for a Young Leader to carry out personal care for a Member. Should it be required however, they must be fully acquainted with the necessary procedures and have the permission of the parents or carers. The Young Leader should also understand the level of care required by the Member.

Family support

Where you have built up and maintained regular contact with the parent or carer of a disabled child, you will have become aware of what support is available from the young person's family. While many parents and carers will recognise the value of the Scouting experience that you are offering, and be ready to help in anyway possible, please remember not to make too many demands on them. The Scouting activities you offer may represent a rare opportunity of respite from their daily caring duties.

District and County/ Area Support

There is a channel of Special Needs support available to all Groups in the UK. Although provision of this support will vary in each District or County/Area, it is the responsibility of the District Commissioner and County/Area Commissioner to ensure that support is available. The method of obtaining this support should also be clearly defined and communicated to all Groups. It is recommended that there should be a nominated person in each County/Area (usually, but not necessarily, the ACC/AAC (Special Needs)) who is also a member of the County/Area

team. The District Commissioner should discuss how support is provided with the County Commissioner. Some Districts will appoint an ADC (Special Needs). Others might find it more appropriate to use the County/Area provision. It should also be emphasised that support is available on a national level from the National Special Needs team, made up of volunteer and professional staff contactable at Gilwell Park.

Training opportunities

All adults working with the Sections will normally complete Module 7, *Valuing Diversity*. Leaders will also be encouraged to develop a greater understanding of their role and broaden their knowledge in this area by completing Module 36, *Special Needs*. Details of all training opportunities are available from your Local Training Manager. A list of recommended external courses is published on the Special Needs pages on ScoutBaseUK (www.scoutbase.org.uk)

If you need any further advice on any of the above contact the Development and Diversity Department at Gilwell Park who support the National Commissioner – Special Needs who has access to a range of people with a variety of experience who should be able to provide further help.