

# Successfully including scouts with special needs



Item Code FS250061 January 2012 Edition no 2 (103898)

0845 300 1818

During your time in Scouting, it is likely that you will come across a young person or adult with special needs. Scouting is an inclusive organisation and with preparation and planning, the majority of young people should be able to join in with your group's usual activities.

This factsheet explains a few simple steps to help you include young people with special needs into your group.

## 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.

There are three important ways to ensure that you have all the necessary information and are providing the appropriate support:

1. Ask parents or carers to complete a membership form when the young person joins the section. The form should request 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.

2. Arrange a meeting with parents or carers. This is a good way to begin to get to know families and to build a level of trust. It also allows the leader to emphasise the importance of knowing the details on 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.
3. Where a child will require particular support, it is important to maintain contact with parents or carers. It is useful to have a specified leader who is responsible for maintaining meetings and keeping 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.

## What sort of information should I ask for?

This will depend on the nature of the young person's needs. There are a range of factsheets about different special needs, including appropriate websites to visit for extra information. These are certainly worthwhile reading and may help you 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 behavioural disorder:*

- *What are some of the things that trigger challenging behaviour in your child?*
- *What methods have worked well at school or home to discourage and cope with this behaviour?*

## The Scout Association

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

- *Are there any situations to avoid where your child will find it difficult to cope?*
- *Is any medication taken and, if so, how often?*
- *Are there any special considerations we need to be aware of when taking your son to camp?*
- *Does he require any additional rest periods?*

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

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

### **What next?**

Having discussed the young person's needs with their parents or carers, it is now time to think about whether your current Scouting provisions meet their needs, or if adjustments need to be made. This includes the meeting place itself and the programme, as well as any other identified issues. It is important that your section provides a flexible and creative programme for the young person that can be balanced with the needs of the other scouts in the section.

You will need to discuss the situation with the other members of your leadership team, other leaders in the group and your group or district executive. This will help with ensuring the young person can progress through the sections, and will give the other leaders time to plan for their provision. 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.

To make their inclusion easier, 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. Remember that requirements for badges and awards can be flexible to meet the abilities of those with special needs. Discuss what may be appropriate with the young person, parents or carers and leadership team.

### **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 (yellow card) 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.

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. For more information about personal care, visit the Member Resources pages of [scouts.org.uk](http://scouts.org.uk).

### **Safeguarding leaders**

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.

### **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 Unity Insurance Services on 0845 0945 702.

### **What support is available?**

There is a wide range of support available to you, both from headquarters and locally, to help you include scouts with special needs into your section.

#### **People**

- Diversity and Inclusion staff team at Gilwell Park – [diversity.inclusion@scouts.org.uk](mailto:diversity.inclusion@scouts.org.uk).
- ACC/AAC (special needs) or special needs adviser – your county or area may have a volunteer that is responsible for helping you to include scouts with special needs and will provide advice about how best to do this
- Young leaders – it may be beneficial to have a young leader in your section that has a specific role to support a member with special needs, acting as a 'buddy.'  
Remember that young leaders are still young people and should not be left responsible for the other members.
- Families – the parents, carers or other family of the young person may be able to come along to meetings to help out. They will know best what methods of support are effective.

#### **Other resources**

- The Member Resources pages of [scouts.org.uk](http://scouts.org.uk) has information about different special needs and what support is available, as well as links to specific resources and factsheets.
- Grants – there are grants available from headquarters to support you in making Scouting accessible to all. Visit [www.scouts.org.uk/grants](http://www.scouts.org.uk/grants) for more information.
- Training – all adults working with the sections should complete Module 7, *Valuing diversity*, of the adult training scheme. 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.