

The Role of the Group Scout Leader...An Introduction



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Welcome!

Welcome to the role of Group Scout Leader –one of the key roles of The Scout Association.

Whether you have been a member of the movement for a number of years or are joining Scouting for the first time, this factsheet will give you a feel of what the role involves and where you can get further advice and support.

Introduction to Scouting

Scouting is an international Movement with over 28 million Members spread across 216 Countries and Territories worldwide.

There are about 500,000 members throughout the United Kingdom. This includes over 100,000 adults who have taken up appointments as voluntary Leaders, Administrators and Supporters.

The Sections

At whatever age, a young person in the Movement is a 'Scout'.

The Balanced Programme spans a 6-25 age range, divided up into five Sections. Each Section has its own identity, ethos and style. They all have adult support, which varies in style in the different age groups.

- A Beaver Scout Colony has Members aged 6 - 8
- A Cub Scout Pack has Members aged 8 - 10½
- A Scout Troop has Members aged 10½ - 14

These are all part of a Scout Group.

An Explorer Scout Unit is for young people from 14-18 years old. Explorer Scout Units are part of a Scout District, although some are partnered with Groups.

A Scout Network is for young people aged 18 - 25 years old. Scout Networks are the responsibility of the Scout County or Area, but can be organised at a more local level.

The Purpose of Scouting

Scouting in the UK is organised through The Scout Association. The Scout Association has a clear purpose:

'To help young people achieve their full physical, intellectual, social and spiritual potential as individuals, as responsible citizens and as Members of their local, national and international communities'.

The Association's method of meeting the purpose of Scouting is through the Programme.

More details on the Purpose of Scouting can be found in 'Policy, Organisation and Rules' (POR).

The Programme

The Balanced Programme is a seamless progression of training, activities and awards that covers everything that young people do in Scouting from the ages of 6 to 25. It involves helping young people to grow in six Personal Development Areas: Body, Mind, Faiths and Beliefs, Relationships, Community, and Surroundings.

The Programme is everything we do as Scouts – the activities and the badges, the challenges and awards.

More details on the Programme can be found in the publication 'Scouting Essentials'.

The Principles of Scouting

Scouting has three key principles:

- Duty to Self
- Duty to Others
- Duty to God

Everyone in Scouting expresses their Membership and acceptance of the key principles by making the Scout Promise and following the Scout Law. The Scout Promise and Law give a distinctive ethos to the practices of the Movement and acts as a bond with Scouts worldwide.

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

More details on the Fundamentals of Scouting can be found in the Factsheet FS140004 'Fundamentals of Scouting'.

The role of the Group Scout Leader

Policy, Organisation and Rules (POR) summarises the Group Scout Leader as being responsible for "the continuity and development of training in Sections of the Group" and "for supporting all the adults who work within the Group".

In addition, other responsibilities include:

- maintaining effective communication with others whose advice and support can be of use to the Group;
- acting as Chairman of the Group Scouters' Meeting and encouraging co-operation among the Scouters of the Group;
- nominating the Group Chairman and maintaining an effective Group Executive Committee;
- matters relating to the admission and membership of young people into the Group;
- building and maintaining a good relationship with the Group's immediate community and, in the case of a Sponsored Scout Group, with the Sponsoring Authority and the community it represents.

The Sections

Each Section Leader within the Group is responsible for "planning and implementing a Balanced Programme" for their Section. However, this is "subject to the general supervision of the Group Scout Leader".

In this sense, the GSL becomes the one person who the young person will see throughout their time in the Group. This helps to provide obvious links between the Sections and ensures that young people move on between the Sections of the Group.

To encourage the "*development of training*" the GSL needs to understand the purpose of the Balanced Programme across all the Sections and how each fits together.

The GSL should actively encourage Sections to build on the skills learnt in previous sections and to prepare them for growth in Scouting terms as they move onto the next Section. The GSL also needs to be aware of the various rules and safety guidelines and ensure that the Leaders in the Group are aware of them.

The GSL should help to ensure that Section Leaders are encouraged to develop and introduce new ideas and activities. Above all, the GSL should help each Section, and indeed the Group as a whole, to continuously review its Programme to ensure that it is:

- relevant and attractive;
- easy to understand and operate;
- progressive and accessible;
- appealing to a wide range of young people;
- meaningful and fulfilling;
- safe and enjoyable.

The Assistant District Commissioners for each Section (or District Leaders) can help with this too, as their role is to develop and support the Sections. A good working relationship with them will prove to be helpful.

Links between the Sections

You are responsible for ensuring the smooth transfer of young people from one section to another at the appropriate age.

There are many things you can do to encourage links and effective communications between the Sections.

For example, through your chairing of the Group Scouters' Meetings you can encourage the links between the Sections; encourage Group social events and joint events between Sections to create a family atmosphere within your Group.

Far too many young people leave Scouting instead of moving onto the next Section, so anything you can do to slow this loss down will be of enormous benefit to the Group and Scouting as a whole, and the young people themselves.

The GSL should also ensure that young people in the Group move on to the District provision of Explorer Scouts when the time comes and it is important that you maintain good links with the District Explorer Scout Commissioner and their team.

Supporting adults in the Group

One of the key parts of the role of the GSL is managing adults in the Scout Group.

Recruitment

Recruitment of adults will be a key part of your role, ensuring that there are enough adults in a Section to ensure its effective operation is vital to the success and development of your Scout Group.

More details on the recruitment of adults can be found in the publications 'Recruitment of Adult Volunteers'.

The overriding issue when considering an individual for an appointment is the safety and security of young people and their development in accordance with the Purpose of the Association.

Part of your role is therefore to ensure that all adults within the Group are 'fit and proper' for their role.

No person aged 18 or over may be permitted to undertake any responsibilities within Scouting until the appropriate checks have been made. The enquiries must include a Personal Enquiry.

Your District will have an Appointments sub-Committee whose role is to make adults feel welcome and to ensure that the appropriate checks have been carried out on them and undertake an independent assessment of an adult's suitability for their role.

More details on the appointment of adults in the Scout Group and appropriate checks can be found in The Introduction and Chapter 3 of 'POR' and publication 'The Appointment Process (guidelines) for Appointment sub-Committees'.

Induction

Adults might be recruited as Warranted Leaders, as Sectional Assistants, or as Group Supporters. All adults in the Scout Group must feel valued and properly inducted if they are to remain members of the Movement. A good induction will help them develop in their role and make them feel they are capable of carrying it out.

More details on inducting adults in their role can be found in the publication 'Induction: starting adults in a new role'.

Support

As a GSL, you will be a 'line manager' for adults in the Scout Group. These adults will be responsible to you for their Scouting role, and as such it will be up to you to support them.

Support in this context means:

- Agreeing their role description;
- Communicating with them;
- Ensuring they have the appropriate equipment and resources for their role;
- Being a source of advice;
- Encouraging and motivating them.

More details on how best to support adults can be found in the publication 'Support within Scouting'.

Review

Reviews are an opportunity for you to discuss with those that you manage how they are getting on in their role and discuss 'what happens next'.

As GSL, you have a key role to play in the formal review of Warranted and local appointments in your Group at the end of an individual's period of appointment.

The outcomes of such a review may involve renewing the appointment, reassigning the adult to another role or in some cases retirement from an active appointment.

As well as formal appointment reviews, to help support your team, it is also helpful to have regular informal reviews (one to ones) to give constructive feedback and to allow them to address any issues of concern they might have.

More details on both formal and informal reviews can be found in the publication 'Review: Helping adults choose the Right Path'.

The Group Executive Committee

The Scout Group is led by you, the Group Scout Leader. The Group Executive Committee members are the charity trustees.

The Group Executive Committee exists to support the Group Scout Leader in meeting the responsibilities of the appointment. The Executive Committee is responsible for:

- the maintenance of the Group's property and equipment;
- the raising of funds and the administration of the Group's finance;
- the insurance of persons, property and equipment;
- Group public occasions; and
- assisting with the recruitment of Leaders and other adult support.

The Group Chairperson (who is nominated by you) is a crucial partner in the management of the Group. A good working relationship with Chairperson will make your role easier.

More details on the role and makeup of the Group Executive Committee can be found in 'POR' and the factsheet 'The Group Executive Committee'.

More details on insurance can be found in the publication 'Insurance an Insomniacs Guide'.

Finance, Equipment and Accommodation

Finance is a common problem for most Scout Groups – either having too much or too little can cause a lot of headaches. An efficient Group Treasurer and fund raising team can relieve much of the pressure from Leaders. GSLs should however be checking that monies are being properly accounted for and that Leaders are being reimbursed for any expenditure.

Most Groups own a vast array of camping equipment. This needs to be adequately insured and stored safely. A good initial step would be to have the Group Secretary (or another appropriate person) make an inventory of all equipment owned by the Group and see what can be disposed of and what needs replacing. Funding can then be allocated for new items.

Whether you own your own meeting place or rent it, there will be a number of things to consider. Having your own building can be an enormous benefit, but it can also be a huge drain on time and money. An early priority will be to ensure you have access to all the relevant deeds and insurance documentation. It would also be worth checking if the trusteeship of your building is vested with The Scout Trust Corporation, as this helps ensure continuity. If you rent your meeting place, make sure that there is a proper hire agreement and that adequate provision is made for the storage of group equipment.

More details on vesting trusteeship with The Scout Association Trust Corporation can be found in the factsheet FS320600 'Scout Association Trust Corporation'.

District and County Support

You will already have met your District Commissioner during your recruitment, but it is worthwhile making a special effort to find out about the communications facilities available and the way you can get to know what is happening at District and County level. By the same token, do make use of what is offered in the way of activities and facilities. Remember too that Commissioners and Administrators are there to help – they are not a judgement from on high! If you have a problem then ask them for advice.

Headquarters Support

The Headquarters of the UK Scout Association is located at Gilwell Park in London. For help, advice and guidance you can call The Scout Information Centre on 0845 300 1818.

Another way of getting information is through *Scouting* magazine, which is published bi-monthly

and sent free of charge to every adult Member of the Association.

Appointment and Training of GSLs

The GSL's role is both responsible and demanding. It is not a figurehead appointment, but calls for the active and sensitive application of a wide range of management and leadership skills. It can be a very challenging role – but it can also be very rewarding!

Group Scout Leaders are not expected to be instant experts in everything, but over time you will be given the opportunity to gain new skills and ideas through informal support and training opportunities.

Appointments are for an agreed fixed term and are subject to formal review by the District Commissioner.

The GSL's formal training needs are met through the agreement of a Personal Learning Plan with a Training Adviser. The training scheme is modular, and each of the relevant modules can be delivered in a variety of different methods to suit the individual concerned.

In addition, regular meetings of all the GSLs held by the District Commissioner enable GSLs to exchange ideas and help each other manage Scouting in their Scout Groups. Such contact can be an invaluable source of help and support, especially to new GSLs.

Summary

A Group Scout Leader's influence on and contribution to Scouting in general, and the development of both young people and adults in particular, is probably proportional to the GSL's own enthusiasm for the role. And for this enthusiasm much thanks!

Further Information

All publications and factsheets mentioned in this factsheet are available from The Scout Information Centre on 0845 300 1818 or info.centre@scout.org.uk

Check out their online catalogue at www.scouts.org.uk/scoutbase