

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



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## **Welcome!**

Welcome to the role of Group Scout Leader (GSL) –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 a wide range of appointments including 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 provides a framework for the 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 through six tailored programme zones: Community, Global, Beliefs and Attitudes, Outdoor and Adventure, Creative Expression and Fit for life.

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

*More details on the Programme can be found in each Section's 'Essentials' resource.*

## **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](mailto:info.centre@scout.org.uk) [www.scoutbase.org.uk](http://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 GSL as being responsible for "the continuity and development of training in Sections of the Group", "the development of Scouting in the Group's catchment area" 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 Leaders' Meeting and encouraging co-operation among the Leaders of the Group;
- nominating the Group Chairman and maintaining an effective Group Executive Committee in accordance with POR rule 3.23;
- 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 key role linking the Sections. The GSL should provide obvious links between the Sections and ensure 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 providing a progressive Balanced Programme across all the Sections and continually monitor 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 abide by 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 communication between the Sections.

For example, through your chairing of the Group Leaders' 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.

The GSL should ensure the progression and development for each young person across the Sections. The GSL should ensure that Section Leaders are supporting and encouraging Young people moving between the Sections as this is a crucial point for the retention of young people in Scouting.

The GSL should also inform and encourage young people in the Group to move on to a 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 within the Group 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 publication BS320030 'Recruitment of Adult Volunteers'.*

Your District will have an Appointments Advisory 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.

As GSL, you will be responsible for sponsoring and supporting adults through their appropriate Appointments Process.

*More details on the appointment of adults in the Scout Group and appropriate checks can be found in The Introduction and at the back of 'POR' and publication 'POR: The Appointment Process-Appointing the Appointments Advisory Committee'.*

### **Induction**

All adults in the Scout Group must feel valued and properly inducted if they are to remain members of the Movement. As GSL you should introduce them around, explain what meetings there are to attend, agree with them what their role will be and help them receive the training they need to carry out that role. 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 BS320032 '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.
- Provide them with continuing support for their personal development and any further training.

*More details on how best to support adults can be found in the publication BS320031 'Support within Scouting'.*

### **Review**

Regular and frequent 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'.

Additionally, as GSL, you have a key role to play in the formal review of Appointed 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 BS320033 'Review: Helping adults choose the Right Path'.*

### **The Group Executive Committee**

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

The Group Executive Committee exists to support the GSL 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' available to download from [www.unityins.co.uk](http://www.unityins.co.uk).

### **Finance, Equipment and Accommodation**

Finance is a key part of managing a Scout Group. An efficient Group Treasurer and fund raising team will relieve much of the pressure from Leaders. As GSL you 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 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) establish and maintain an inventory of all equipment owned by the Group to ensure the correct care and storage of equipment 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 the Group 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.

### **Headquarters Support**

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

The *GSL virtual induction* resource, in six parts, covers all the key aspects of the role. You can download the sessions in stages (eg once a month) or get them all in one go and use at your leisure.

Also the *Keys to Success: Group Scout Leaders* booklet is designed to help explain the role of the GSL. It provides advice and support for you in your role. Other members of your Group may also find it useful.

You can order printed copies of both from the Scout Information Centre or download them from [www.scouts.org.uk/gslsupport](http://www.scouts.org.uk/gslsupport).

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. Support is also available online through our website [www.scouts.org.uk](http://www.scouts.org.uk) where you can sign up to receive our e-mail Newsletter *ScoutingPlus*, and the *Focus* supplement with your *Scouting* magazine.

### **Appointment and Training of GSLs**

The GSLs 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!

GSLs 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. Your appointment, and its duration, should be done by mutual agreement between you and your line manager.

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. On completion of your training you will be awarded a Wood Badge to mark your achievement.

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**

As a GSL you will be responsible for ensuring the provision of a better Scouting experience for more young people. A GSL'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 and good luck in your role!

## **Further Information**

All publications and factsheets mentioned in this factsheet are available from The Scout Information Centre on 0845 300 1818 (020 8433 7100) or [info.centre@scouts.org.uk](mailto:info.centre@scouts.org.uk). Check out their online catalogue at [www.scouts.org.uk](http://www.scouts.org.uk).