

# The seven steps to being a Training Adviser



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To be an effective Training Adviser requires working to a simple structure or process. Following the process will ensure that the adults we support get the help they need.



The process involves the following steps.

## 1 Identify learning and development needs

Learning and development needs are the gaps between what an adult is *required* to do and what their current knowledge, skills and attitudes *enable* them to do. These gaps arise from two main sources.

### The Scout Association's requirements of an adult in a particular role

These requirements are described by looking at the modules required for a particular appointment. Each of these state what The Scout Association expects a person to be able to do. Where the adult is not able to produce evidence that they can do what is required, then we can say that a learning or development need exists. The onus is on the adult to provide that evidence through the validation process. The Training Adviser cannot waive the requirements of the validation process and can only accredit the module when sufficient evidence has been produced. Remember, Training Advisers are working to national standards, not their own.

### Local or personal needs and interests

If for example, a Group Scout Leader has to learn something beyond the scope of the modules defined for their role, then we can say that a new learning or development need exists. The need could be addressed by the GSL undertaking additional modules or by them doing some additional learning from outside of the scheme. Options might include:

- participating in the local government planning process for an application for a new headquarters
- understanding about a specific ethnic community
- employment law issues relating to a District employee.

Identifying these needs can only come from a discussion of the adult's current situation, the

challenges they face and how they plan to address those challenges.

## 2 Agree and record a Personal Learning Plan

Once the Training Adviser and the adult have identified the needs, the next stage is agreeing the Personal Learning Plan. This involves selecting the training and learning opportunities that best meet the needs. A timetable to complete the learning should then be agreed.

Issues to consider here are:

- the learner's circumstances and personal availability
- how they prefer to learn (e.g., attending courses, self-study, coaching, etc.)
- availability of learning opportunities
- priorities for the learning.

It may be that the standard learning opportunities, provided by the Scout County, do not match the learner's requirements. At this point you could discuss other alternatives with your Local Training Manager.

Once you have agreed the activities the learner will undertake, record them clearly on the Personal Learning Plan and keep a copy for yourself.

## 3 Monitor progress at regular intervals

As the Training Adviser, you will want to know that the learner is working to the plan and that the learning is enjoyable and useful. At the same time, the learner will want to know that they have your support.

A simple way of satisfying these needs is to agree at the initial meeting a programme of contact. The contact could be at weekly or monthly intervals, or at some other point agreed between you. The key thing is to provide support when the learner needs it and to use the same contact times to monitor progress.



Also, agree whether the contact should be face-to-face, by email or by telephone. Again, it will be best to work to the learner's preferences.

If progress is not as stated in the plan, you can meet to re-plan the learning programme, or identify other opportunities to replace those originally agreed.

Again, keep a copy of the revised plan and agree again when you will be in contact.

#### 4 Provide constructive feedback

Feedback is the process of informing a learner what you have observed about their performance or their learning. Its value lies in what the learner takes away and does with the feedback.

Effective feedback gives the learner some accurate, factual information about what they have done. The learner should reflect on what they have learned and what they can do with that information.

Feedback should be structured so that the first information a learner hears is positive. You can then go on to provide feedback on areas where they can develop or improve. Think carefully about the language you use. Words like 'weaknesses' or 'negatives' can create resistance and provoke a defensive response. It is better to discuss 'areas for development'.

Feedback is more acceptable to the learner when it is factual and accurate, rather than based on assumptions. For example:

*'You planned the event in a structured way. You could have incorporated more time for review. This would have helped you ensure you stuck to and achieved your goals.'*

is better than:

*'You planned it OK. Where you went wrong was in your review. You obviously lost sight of your goals.'*

Information to use in feedback can include:

- your own observations of the learner
- what the learner tells you
- information you have picked up from others or elsewhere.

Feedback is successful when the learner takes away from it a sense of recognition and satisfaction for what they have achieved and a sense of opportunity for what they can do next.

#### 5 Support and encourage learners

Different people need different types of support. Some will just want information; others will want to know that you are there for them to contact; others might want you to show that you care. The best support is that which matches the person's needs. A good idea is to discuss these needs at an early stage in the process and to then plan to deliver support in an appropriate way.

For most learners there will come times when they wish to share successes or failures. Successes should be praised and recognised. By the same token, people rarely do better after a failure or difficulty by being told where they went wrong. Most people are more likely to improve and eventually succeed if they receive some form of positive encouragement.

As you get to know a person's strengths you can use feedback to strengthen the encouragement. For example:

*'Most people experience a set back at some point in their training. It comes at different times for different people. The thing to do is to learn from it and to have another go. For example, I know you enjoy and are very good at leading team meetings. Can you solve this problem with the planning permission by getting the team together to work on it as one group, rather than you trying to solve it alone?'*

This form of encouragement is likely to help the learner understand their difficulty in a wider context and to draw upon resources that they clearly do have. They have not failed, they just haven't used their best strengths yet. Using them is likely to increase their chances of success.

#### 6 Validate the learning

Validation is about confirming that the required learning has taken place by checking what the learner has done with it in practice. In other contexts it might be known as assessment.

Each module has an associated validation brief. This describes the validation that the learner should complete to demonstrate that they have applied the learning satisfactorily.

Please remember the following key points about validation:

- The onus is on the learner to complete the validation tasks and to produce evidence that they have done so.
- The Training Adviser should compare the evidence



presented against what is required by the validation.

- The validation will include guidance to help the Training Adviser make their assessment.
- The Training Adviser should only sign off the validation if they are convinced that the evidence presented is the learner's own work, demonstrates an understanding of the learning covered by the module objectives and is sufficient to cover the requirements of the validation for the module.
- If any of the above criteria are not met, the Training Adviser should indicate what the learner still has to do to complete the validation for that module. It is the Training Adviser's responsibility to protect the standard of the module.
- The Training Adviser should use open questions to seek any further evidence required of the learner's understanding and its application.
- If you are in any doubt, contact another Training Adviser or your Training Manager before confirming the validation.
- The Training Adviser should keep a written record of what evidence has been produced, the questions asked and the answers supplied.
- At all stages the learner should be kept aware of what is required of them to complete the validation, and of how when the validation will take place.

Further help is available in the factsheet *Validation Processes* and *Guidelines*.

## 7 Identify new needs and repeat the process

This last stage in the process simply involves going back to stage one and checking what gaps still exist. Where gaps do exist then you can agree a new plan. This continuous loop will help adults in Scouting keep their skills effective and up to date.

At the appropriate point, you can check that the requirements for the Wood Badge have been met and complete the recommendation form.

Remember the requirements for ongoing learning. The continuous loop will help identify real needs, rather than merely activities to fulfil a requirement.