

2.10 Acting as liaison for your Scout Fellowship



Keeping in touch

A Scout Fellowship can only provide Active Support if good lines of communication are maintained with all Sections of local Scouting.

For example, a District based Scout Fellowship should be in direct communication with all of the various District Teams, including any which are organising specific events such as the swimming gala or gang show.

The advantage of this is that the Scout Fellowship is kept fully briefed. The various Sections in Scouting will also be constantly aware that the Scout Fellowship is there to help them, and is much more likely to involve the Fellowship at an earlier stage.

Good communication means that the needs of local Scouting can be much more easily met, and understood.

Attending meetings in the Scout Group, District or Area/County

The best way to maintain open lines of communication is for a member of the Scout Fellowship to actually attend meetings in the Scout Group, District or Area/County. These meetings may include:

- Sectional programming meetings for the Group's Beaver Scout Colony, Cub Scout Pack, Scout Troop or Explorer Scout Unit and Scout Network
- Group Scout Leader's meetings
- Group Executive meetings
- ADC's meetings for the various training Sections
- District GSL's meetings
- District Executive Committee meetings
- AAC/ACC's meetings for the various training Sections
- Area/County DC's meetings
- Area/County Executive Committee meetings
- Regional meetings for the various youth Sections
- Various meetings for special events such as camps, outings, gang shows etc.

It is unlikely that a member of the Scout Fellowship will attend all of these meetings, but it is beneficial that the Fellowship is represented. The GSL or appropriate Commissioner should ensure that the people organising such a meeting invite a member of the Scout Fellowship to attend on a regular basis.

It is important that the GSL or appropriate Commissioner explains the advantages of having the Scout Fellowship in attendance and endorses the representative.

Even better, the GSL or appropriate Commissioner should try and ensure that the constitution of these meetings includes a member of the Scout Fellowship by right. This can be done in one of several ways, including nominating a member of the Scout Fellowship on to various committees, or asking a member of the Scout Fellowship to attend meetings on their behalf.

Who represents the Scout Fellowship?

Given the large number of meetings in any Scout Group, District or Area/County, it would be unreasonable to expect the Chairman of the Scout Fellowship to attend every one.

It is therefore sensible to ask members of the Scout Fellowship to act as 'liaison officers' between the Fellowship and other of local Scouting. This role can be shared amongst the members of the Executive Committee, or the wider membership.

Generally it is better to appoint someone who has a good working knowledge of the area with which they will be liaising. They are much more likely to be accepted on both sides if they know what they are talking about!

For example, ask a Scout Fellowship member who is also a Cub Scout Leader to represent the Scout Fellowship at the District Cub Scout Leader's meetings. Ask a Scout Fellowship member who is already a member of the stage crew to act as liaison with the gang show back stage crew.

This also means that they will already be attending the necessary meetings and will not have to make a special effort to go.

To be an effective liaison officer

The following are a few simple tips to becoming an effective liaison officer:

- Ensure that both parties understand that you are acting as liaison officer between the Scout Fellowship on the Section/committee concerned. Make sure that this is agreed by the Scout Fellowship Executive Committee and the Leader/Chairman of the relevant Section/committee in advance.
- Wherever possible, gain the active support of your GSL or appropriate Commissioner. Make sure that they 'sell' the advantages of your role to the Section committee's Leader/Chairman.
- Make sure that as far as possible, all communications goes through you. This will avoid 'mixed messages' and a single point of local contact for Scouting. If direct communications between the Chairman of the Scout Fellowship and the Leader/Chairman of the Section/committee is needed, make sure that you're included or fully briefed.
- Make sure that you understand the limits of your authority. Check these with the Chairman of your Scout Fellowship and the Leader/Chairman of the section/committee you are liaising with.
- 'Sell' the Scout Fellowship, and volunteer the potential services of the Fellowship when you feel that it is appropriate.
- However, do not commit the Scout Fellowship to anything or promise that the Scout Fellowship can deliver something without checking first.

- Don't ask the Scout Fellowship to do something unless the request is agreed by the section/ body you are liaising with. It can be embarrassing if the Scout Fellowship turns up to help and someone asks "Why are you here?" - or even worse "We don't need your help."
- If in doubt, take notes of your own. Although minutes will be produced for most meetings you attend, these may not always include the details your Scout Fellowship needs, or you may not receive a copy in time to brief your Fellowship.
- Don't oversell your role - this can take a lot of time and turn people off. There's no need to report back on everything. Ensure that your report back to the Scout Fellowship is as concise as possible and only go into detail when it affects the Scout Fellowship (and vice versa).
- If you can't attend a meeting, arrange a replacement to take your place, brief them properly beforehand and ask them to update you after the meeting.
- Be prepared to speak about the broader role of the Scout Fellowship, including the social aspects of membership. There are lots of opportunities to promote the Fellowship and you may recruit some new members by giving a good presentation.

By following these simple guidelines any member of the Scout Fellowship can be an effective liaison officer. You'll be a channel for effective communications between those needing and providing the support and local Scouting will greatly benefit from your efforts.