

Introduction to support

What does it mean to give support to adults in Scouting?

The word support, in this context, means to take care of, help or encourage. The adults you support could need any of the following:

buoying up backing caring for practical help approval
encouragement moral support egging on looking after to be upheld
friendship loyalty aid assistance

There are a number of ways you can get in contact with the people you support, including meetings, 1:1 visits, by phone, text and email.

The good news is that there are plenty of ways that this support can be offered. The aim of this publication is to help you get the most out of the support that is available to adults in your area.

Action plan for good support

So where should you start? Work your way through the following action plan to assess the current situation, and to look at moving forward.

Take the time to make regular contact and build relationships

There are a number of ways you can get in contact with the people you support – in meetings, on a one-to-one basis, socially, visits to their Section meetings, training courses, by telephone, text messages, email or other ways of communication such as newsletters etc. Think about how you can use some of these methods to best effect, and plan when and how you will carry them out.

Review the support you currently offer

With your team, take the time to review the support you currently offer. Ask yourselves: Do all the adults in our 'patch' know where to get support? Do they get the support they need? Do they have to ask for support, or is it readily available?

Focus on the fact that all teams in Scouting exist to support the adults who deliver the programme to young people. Could the work be organised or allocated better?

Identify the support that is needed

A good way to identify the support that is needed is to ask the Leaders themselves – be careful not to promise more than you can deliver, but at least get a focus for your energies from these discussions.

Areas of support to think about might be: communications, information flow, 'workload' of Leaders, facilities and resources, paperwork, use of the Scout Fellowship to support the programme, ongoing learning, refresher training, support structures (e.g. Assistant District Commissioners), 'management' of Leaders – recruitment, induction and reviews.

List different options for meeting these needs

Get your team together to discuss the ways of providing the support that has been requested. Don't stop at the first idea, create a list of all the options; think widely to come up with creative solutions. Working with your team on this will mean that you come up with lots more ideas, provided that you encourage everyone to put forward all their suggestions – however silly they may seem at first! Give yourselves permission to think 'outside the box.'

Prioritise and decide on action

First it is necessary to prioritise the types of support identified – you can't do everything at once! You and your team need to decide who needs what support most urgently – and tackle those requests first.

There are a variety of criteria that may help to prioritise the requests: cost, time requirement, skill availability, and appropriateness. Alternatively, the advantages and disadvantages of the various options could be considered and then 'ranked' in order.

A plan for action then needs to be put together and should be researched thoroughly. Such a plan should consider the time scale, necessary time requirements, resources/equipment required and their availability to you. However simple the call for support, it is always useful to go through the action plan in your head.

If you think you are struggling, remember there are also people to support you and it may well be time to call on them.

Allocate resources and people

You and your team need to allocate resources, both human and material, to

provide the support needed.

As this support has been asked for, you should agree with the recipient the extent of the extra support that you are offering. Agreeing a time scale within which the objectives can be achieved is also vital. Even though they have asked you for support, you may not be the most appropriate person to deliver the support.

It is important to use your resources wisely. People only have a limited amount of time, and material resources always seem to be in short supply. Carefully select the resources to use for support (don't throw everything at every request) and make clear when the support will end. Some forms of support cannot run indefinitely (e.g. you could not run Section meetings in the absence of the Leader forever).

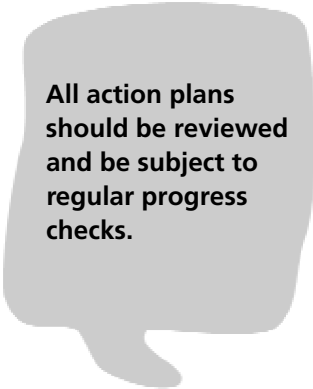
Give the support

Deliver the promised support within the limits and timeframe that you have agreed.

Support is not you being in control, but being there to help. The worst thing to do is 'take-over' and give the impression that you have 'the' solution. People need to be allowed to make their own mistakes (to some extent) as they go, as this is the only way that people can learn and grow.

Delivering support is more than providing a person with the necessary resources. Somebody (not necessarily you!) may need to help them use the resources you've provided.

Support that you have given (if it is well directed, considered and planned) will be remembered and appreciated, even if it was small. The reverse will also be true if you the promises made weren't kept (were they realistic? Did you plan and manage your resources?) You will lose credibility in the eyes of those that you support. Remember that adults who are well supported are more likely to stay involved with Scouting.



All action plans should be reviewed and be subject to regular progress checks.

Review the response

Did the support you offered have the desired effect? All action plans, however small, should be reviewed and be subject to regular progress checks. Make sure that promised actions and materials have been delivered at appropriate and agreed times.

Reviewing as you go along means that any necessary agreed changes to the plan can be made along the way. This will help you achieve the agreed outcome.

This process may mean that you go back to different parts of the checklist – making sure that what you have agreed still meets people's needs. You may want to think about how you have structured your team and the way in which you decided to offer support.

This checklist should give you a good idea of the things that you can do to ensure

the people with whom you work Scouting are well supported.
As you work on this, think about how the support you are offering fits in with the support structures of Scouting.

The benefit of making this support available, and helping people to access it, will be happier and more confident Leaders providing Better Scouting for More Young People.