

Starting in Scouting

What happens now that I've said yes?

Most people will be asking themselves all sorts of questions. For example:

- What have I let myself in for?
- Do I have any useful skills?
- Will I get the hang of it?
- Can I ever be as capable as those others can?
- What needs to be my first step?

There is no need for you to worry; such questions are quite normal. However, they do suggest that you need support. Whether you are going to be working with young people, leading other adults or supporting a Scout Group/District/County in another capacity, it is not expected that you to be able to get started on your own.

The first few weeks are always challenging whenever we tackle something new. It is this period when we are finding our feet and when plans for the future are laid. It is clearly a very important time and deserves time and effort. There are four elements:

1. Discussing your Scouting job in detail
2. Identifying the support you need
3. Making plans to get that support
4. Having a go at the job.

The key stages

1. Discuss your Scouting job in detail

There is only one way to do this. It involves a face to face discussion, usually with the person who recruited you or who is going to be your line manager. Together you can discuss the information, introductions and personal support that you will need to get started. The level of discussion will depend on the job in Scouting that you are to undertake. There are, however, some basic rules. You need to have someone who will act as the focus for your help and support. They need to have sufficient experience to be able to do the job but they will also need to be:

- friendly and supportive
- prepared to make time for this important task
- accessible and acceptable to you.

You can make some simple plans to make sure you get this help. Remember that at this stage the plans should cover the early weeks, perhaps the first two months. At intervals, together you can take stock and see how things are going. You can modify the plans if necessary and introduce more of your ideas as you get more involved.

2. Identifying the support you need

When starting something new we all need support. Experience tells us that at the start, support probably comes under the following heading:

- information to help you understand Scouting
- contributing existing knowledge, skills and experience
- learning and using practical skills
- meeting other people
- personal support and encouragement

When you have discussed and listed the needs for each area, your supporter will then be in a position to help you make some plans.

3. Making plans to get support

The lists of needs that have evolved during your discussions now need to be turned into a support plan. You will need to decide against each need:

- how each they will be met (the **method**)
- what is to happen (the **action**)
- who will do it (by **whom**)
- when it will happen (by **when**)

Although it seems a little formal at first, making plans in this way is a very effective and reassuring way of planning support. It makes sure that both you and others involved know what is needed, how support is to be provided, by whom and by when. It avoids confusion and allows you have a contribution in your own progress.

Try to prioritise the items on the support plan so that initially you concentrate on the most important things. Both you and the person supporting you should share the responsibility for taking action. If all of the responsibility is placed on one person, that person could become overloaded while the other gets frustrated by the lack of progress. Making and carrying out the support plan is only part of the process. Getting together with your supporter to review how things have gone is just as important.

The plan can be used to meet and get support from different people in Scouting. This will help you to make friends with new people. It also helps share the load of providing the support. Remember Scouting has a responsibility to support you.

4. Have a go at the job

Nothing boosts people's confidence more than achieving something. This is particularly true for new adults. They establish credibility with their colleagues, the young people, other adults and most importantly with themselves.

It makes sense to find something with which you are familiar and, if possible, is something fresh and new to those who you are working with. Carrying out an activity that is not done at the moment is a good idea as it will be new to all concerned and people could learn new skills.

Basing an activity around a hobby or interest is another useful way to get started. If you are a newcomer who will be involved in Scouting in another way, working with a more experienced person on a bigger project may also work. This is often a good way of getting involved if you are very unsure.

Good luck in your new role!