

One Movement working together

Promoting co-education in Scouting

'We believe that the best way to provide proper co-education is to have Sections that are mixed, accepting both boys and girls at all levels.'



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Helping young people take a constructive place in society

We are all dedicated to helping young people fulfil their potential and become confident, responsible citizens. To achieve this aim, we need to ensure that there are as few barriers as possible to them joining the Movement.

We believe that young people grow into more effective citizens when they live and work together, learning and understanding more about each other. The Scout Association has therefore agreed that all Groups should make provision for all young people to be accepted into all Sections from 1 January 2007.

What is co-education?

A good question!

Co-education in Scouting means that all young people are given the opportunity to understand the opposite sex and empathise with them.

We believe that the best way to provide proper co-education is to have Sections that are mixed, accepting both boys and girls at all levels.

As part of growing up and as part of life, it is normal to spend time in single sex groups. It is quite acceptable to offer opportunities for single sex and mixed activities within the overall Programme. However, if you are offering single sex activities it is important that your leadership team understands why and cannot be accused of stereotyping.

What this means for Scouting locally

Not every Colony, Pack and Troop will need to be mixed. The Group Executive may decide that a better option is to open a separate Colony, Pack, or Troop that will only take girls.

However, once that decision is made, the Group will always have to take girls into the Section. In the future it may mean that the Section may need to take young people of both sexes.

Groups that are already mixed will be able to offer support and advice locally.

An opportunity to recruit adults and grow Scouting

Taking girls into all Sections could provide the motivation for a good focused campaign for more adult help. Additionally, this initiative may be an ideal opportunity for all Groups looking to grow. It would make an excellent basis for a recruitment campaign for young people.



The challenges ahead

We realise that not everyone will find the changes easy to implement. As with any change, there is bound to be resistance and there will be many genuine reasons why the policy is difficult to put into practise locally.

That is why a realistic timetable has been drawn up for the changes to take place. There is nearly a year and a half before this change has to take place. This should give all Groups ample time to consider the tasks and actions that are listed in the checklist on the centre pages.

The timetable for change

The decision to ensure that girls can join all Sections of Scouting will take effect from 1 January 2007. There are very few exceptions to this policy but examples could include:

- Where there are cultural or religious requirements for single sex working
- Where Scouting is offered in a single sex institution (school, young offenders' institute etc.) through a closed Scout Group
- Where a specialist single sex provision is required to meet a clearly identified educational need (Scouting for young mothers, etc.).

Many Scout Groups already accept girls into all or some of their Sections. For these Groups there will be little or no change. Those Groups that do not presently accept girls into any of their Sections have nearly two years to make the change. Groups who only accept girls into some of their Sections need to ensure that the other Section(s) can do so by this deadline.

A number of options

Although all Groups must be able to accept girls into all Sections not every Section has to be mixed. Your Group may choose to set up a separate Section that will accept girls only. Because a separate infrastructure for this new Section will be required, this may cause more problems than it solves.

If your Group's decision is to have single-sex Sections it must be understood that if numbers of either girls, boys or Leaders decreased to a level where a single-sex Section has to close, the remaining Section would have to accept both girls and boys. The decision to go mixed is non-reversible.

Attached is a checklist that may assist you with the process of accepting girls into all Sections within your Group. There may be other specific issues that are important to

you locally and these should be added to the list.

Selling the message

It is vital to promote the benefits of co-education in Scouting to the local community. This includes existing members of the Group, Leaders, parents and friends.

You will also need to decide how best to make the announcement. Ensure that the message is tailored to local needs and that it reaches the young people within your catchment area. Making the decision to accept girls is one thing, making that decision known to all is something else entirely!

Additionally, Groups that already have mixed membership will be able to take advantage of the local publicity, and use the opportunity to increase their membership.

Co-ordinating change at District level

Districts may decide that they wish to co-ordinate the publicity within their District centrally. They may decide to set a date for all Groups to accept girls before the deadline. Clearly this is a local decision.



Co-education: a checklist for success

Use this checklist to plan for the changes that need to be made to your Group's structure and facilities.



	Task action	Date to be completed
1.	Leader meeting held to suggest when the Group will accept girls in all Sections.	
2.	Does the Group have to fit-in with District dates for Groups accepting girls?	
3.	Group Executive to discuss above and clarify actions to be taken.	
4.	Advise existing members of the Group.	
5.	Advise parents.	
6.	Advise Sponsoring Authority.	
7.	Amend Partnership Agreement with Explorer Scout Section.	
8.	Advise local community: List how to do this below e.g Parish magazine, residential newsletter, local paper etc.	
9.	Are there financial considerations for the Group in making this change?	
10.	Are alterations to Group headquarters required? (if yes, list the details below and tie in with finances above)	
11.	Adult recruitment campaign for new Leaders to start. Actions for this campaign will include the following:	
12.	Additional equipment required to accept girls (this may include tents etc.)	

Frequently asked questions

What happens if our Group wants to remain single sex only?

After the 1 January 2007, this will not be possible. There are very few exceptions to this policy but examples could include:

- Where there are cultural or religious requirements for single sex working
- Where Scouting is offered in a single sex institution (school, young offenders' institute etc.) through a closed Scout Group
- Where a specialist single sex provision is required to meet a clearly identified educational need (Scouting for young mothers, etc.)

What about Explorer Scouts and the Scout Network?

These Sections are already mixed, except in some exceptional circumstances. We need to do more to ensure that new Members feel welcome whether they are male or female.

Won't Girlguiding UK be disappointed by this decision?

There has never been any significant change in local Guiding numbers where we have Sections that already take boys and girls. There is not expected to be any change in the future.

An effective joint Scout and Guide committee, runs the Group I belong to; won't this change cause problems for us?

There is no reason why it should. There are many Groups that run on a joint basis where the Scouts are already accepting boys and girls.

There is little evidence to show that Scouts accepting girls into one or more Sections has any direct affect on the numbers in Guide Units. It is important to talk this matter through with the respective Guide Leaders and start this process sooner rather than later. There is no need to leave this

discussion until the last minute and cause problems that could have been resolved earlier.

Again, good communication with parents of both Scouts and Guides will ensure the minimum of difficulty.

Will I need to make changes to my headquarters?

Start looking at the changes that need to be made now! You have a year and a half to make them. Your District and County will be able to provide advice on grants that may be available locally to assist in the finance of such work. Use the checklist provided as a support tool.

What effect will there be on taking young people on nights away?

Usually you will need to provide separate tents or sleeping areas for boys and girls. However, there may be times when issues of safety and security take over – for example during a Scout Expedition Challenge when there maybe only one girl and it would be safer for her to share with three boys rather than sleep alone. When sleeping in a hall, using different ends or creating partitions is the easy solution.

Remember there are different solutions for different situations – there is no definitive answer. Young people and parents must be consulted prior to the activity and be happy with the decision. All adults and Leaders must follow the 'Young People First' code of good practice (the 'yellow card').

If you have concerns about this, speak to a Leader who already organises nights away for young people of both sexes. You will find that there are generally few additional problems as long as thought has gone into the number of tents taken and the sleeping arrangements.

Do we need female Leaders?

No. There is no specific requirement to have a female Leader. However good practice

and common sense would make this sensible. If you do not have a female Leader within your Section then start recruiting now. Perhaps mums may be able to assist on a rota basis?

Will parents be happy if there is no female Leader present?

Try and involve parents in the changes as much as possible, advising them in good time of all the developments taking place locally and nationally. If they are particularly concerned they are always welcome to assist at meetings and events.

Are there any additional Child Protection issues?

There are no additional Child Protection issues when dealing with a group of boys and girls. The 'yellow card' guidelines are there to protect both young people and their Leaders regardless of gender. If the guidelines are followed, young people will be protected and Leaders will not be placed in a position where their conduct can be challenged.

With mixed Groups, it is essential to ensure that parents are kept involved as much as possible about new developments, specifically relating to activities. With their increased involvement, you will find few difficulties.

What happens if our Sponsoring Authority does not accept this decision?

There are only certain exceptions to this rule, outlined above. Consult local Groups who already accept both boys and girls. How did they cope? What challenges did they face?

Emotionally and mentally girls mature earlier; physically they don't. However, all areas of development need to be considered.

The programme is designed to accommodate a wide variety of age/ability/interests/projects and any number of groupings. This flexibility means that

everyone can play a valuable part in the life of the Section.

How were we consulted about this?

Consultation with Groups to accept both boys and girls was undertaken in 1991. The decision whether girls should be accepted into the Group was subsequently left to the Group itself.

During the consultation stage of the current Programme and age ranges, it became clear that majority of Leaders wanted all Groups to accept both boys and girls.

The Centenary of Scouting, 2007, was chosen as the deadline for this change to take effect. It will be a highly publicised opportunity to show the world that Scouting in the UK is truly diverse and open to all.

Are there sanctions if our Group decides to stay 'boys only'?

Yes. All Leaders are required to support the policies of The Scout Association. If these policies are not followed, the District Commissioner will have no option but to ask the Appointments sub-Committee to review individual Warrants and act accordingly.

However, these sanctions will not be necessary if we really believe in the aims of the Association, including '...helping young people take a constructive place in their communities'. If we really believe in this aim it must hold as good for girls as it does for boys.

Clearly we do not wish to lose any Leaders. Co-education is an effective way of spreading the Scouting ethos and ethics as widely as possible.

If you have any other questions, please call the Scout Information Centre on 0845 300 1818 or visit www.scouts.org.uk