The invisible volunteer

Enquiries are up, so why are we still short of help?

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Ben Storrar has a spring in his step as April (and this issue) arrives on your doorsteps. How are you feeling about Scouting where you are?

This issue, we look at our big priority – the recruitment of new adults. Our UK Chief Commissioner, Wayne Bulpitt considers the reasons why people don’t volunteer for Scouting and how we can help. With this in mind, why not speak to parents and other adults and ‘get cooking’ with The Big Adventure?

Rosie Shepherd provides some last-minute tips on delivering a successful recruitment event.

Meanwhile, the Adult Training Support Team reminds managers that trainers are there to provide you with support – so make use of that. The transition to Scout Active Support continues to make good progress, and on page 12 we hear from a manager who has already made the move from Fellowship.

Keep me up to date

Got a good piece of advice? Surprised by how well (or badly) something went? I would like to hear your views and experiences of management in Scouting. Why not drop me a line and tell me what the greatest challenge you face in Scouting? Some suggestions could include:

• the recruitment of adult volunteers
• the retention of adult volunteers
• the demands on your time
• something else entirely ...

Please share your views on these and other Scouting matters at focus@scout.org.uk For news and information for managers in Scouting, please visit www.scouts.org.uk
Countdown to adventure

The Big Adventure starts on 1 May and events run until 31 August 2010. More people than ever are set be involved – what’s happening in your Group, District or County?

First things first: it’s still not too late to decide to hold a Big Adventure. Remember, any camp or event that you are running this summer can be part of The Big Adventure simply by making parents part of the leadership team. Here are some things to think about in the final month – and some areas where parents can help.

4 weeks to go
Planning activities
Are there any gaps in the programme still to fill or ideas which need someone to make them happen? This is an ideal task to get a parent to help with.

3 weeks to go
Sorting out kit
Don’t forget to check your camp equipment before you leave! Give yourself plenty of time to fix things that are missing or broken. An extra pair of hands is always useful at this point.

2 weeks to go
Skills evening
Why not run an evening as part of your term’s programme to introduce skills needed on camp? Both younger Scouts and new parent helpers will benefit from learning skills, whilst older Scouts can take on the responsibility of passing on what they already know.

1 week to go
Buying food
Ask someone who will be helping with the catering at the event to go shopping in the week before. This is a task that can easily be split between a few people.
Planning for success
Remember, the aim of The Big Adventure is to recruit people to volunteer in Scouting. As line managers, this is really where you come in. Whilst many of the parents getting involved will be interested in helping in a section, others may want to help in a different Group, or another role such as on the Executive, as an administrator, a member of the Appointments Advisory Committee or as part of a Scout Active Support Unit.

Having possible roles in mind to offer new volunteers is much more welcoming than passing them around to different people. Remember, it is unlikely you will have lots of offers to be the next Group Scout Leader. However you may have people with particular skills or limited amounts of time to offer who could still be extremely valuable to Scouting.

See The Big Adventure in action
If you can, try and visit as many Big Adventure events as possible so that you can talk to and engage the parents involved. The personal touch goes a long way in recruitment. If you can’t get to events, make sure that those running them know what your vacancies and priorities are, so that they can help recruit to those roles.

A seamless transition
Once you have an offer of a new volunteer, that person will need support and induction in their new role. Again, this is something best thought about in advance so that the move from helper to volunteer can be as seamless as possible. Think about some of the following:

- Who is going to induct them? Will it be the person who organised their Big Adventure, their new line manager, or someone else working in a similar role to them?
- Who else will the new adult need to meet? Make them feel part of the wider team by inviting them along to social events and relevant meetings, but remember they may be short on time so don’t put them off by asking them to do too much at once.
- Will you recruit more than one new adult at the same time? If several Big Adventures have been run successfully across the District, why not plan for the new adults to have part of their induction together? Meeting other people in a similar situation will provide support and reassurance, and it could also be more time effective for you. You could organise a social event for volunteers who have joined in the last year, or work with the County Training Manager to offer Essential Information training in the District for the new adults.

CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECKS
Remember, parents helping with the Big Adventure need to be registered as Occasional Helpers (by completing an Occasional Helper [OH] Form) and have a valid Criminal Records check. Make sure that these are sorted as soon as possible to avoid disappointment.
Each month, the number of adult volunteer enquiries is increasing. However, many managers in Scouting are surprised to learn this when there are still vacancies to fill and not many new faces around. How can this be? Natalie Tomlinson investigates how we can convert more volunteers.
Recent statistics show that enquiries are not always turning into actual volunteers. Unfortunately the key reason for this is the lack of response to volunteer enquiries, coupled with a lack of flexible roles. With key recruitment events such as The Big Adventure (see pages 4-5) taking place over the summer, now is the time to think about how we, as managers, can improve our recruitment strategy. The aim of course, is to ensure that people who express an interest in volunteering are found a role that best suits both needs.

A flexible approach

First, think about the vacancies you have and what skills and time requirements they need. For example, do you have jobs that can be done at the weekends or roles that can be shared so people do not have to attend every week? Are you looking for specialist skills such as accountancy or PR that people can do at a time convenient to them?

Once you have decided on this, write a list of questions that you can ask each enquirer when you speak to them. If you are able to match their needs with yours then we’re much more likely to engage with them and create a mutually beneficial relationship. For example, it’s a good idea to find out the following from your potential volunteer:

- **Skills and experience**
  Do they have any specific skills and experience that they would like to use in their role? What are their hobbies? What do they do for a job? Do they have any previous experience in Scouting or Guiding or working with young people?

- **What type of role**
  Would they prefer to spend time with young people, and if so, which age group? Or would they rather give their time to committees and working with other volunteers?

- **Time commitments**
  Realistically, what time can they offer? There is little point saying a role will only take up one hour a week when you know it will take three or four times that.

Do they have time available during the day or at weekends where you could use their skills? Would they be better suited to a role they could share with someone else?

- **Why do they want to volunteer for Scouting?**
  Is it because they love working with young people; because they want some experience to add to their UCAS application or CV, or to make new friends or gain new skills? It is important that we understand this in order to find them a suitable role that they will enjoy and meet their expectations.

Who looks after your membership enquiries?

There are now many volunteers specifically responsible for membership enquiries across the country. They are asking these and similar questions and achieving excellent results recruiting new volunteers into suitable positions.

Stephanie, a Membership Secretary from Dagenham, said: ‘Since taking on the enquiries for the District it has meant that I am able to take the pressure off my District Commissioner and offer a great level of customer care to potential members. This has meant over the last 12 months we have placed 37 new volunteers in the District, all of whom are now thriving in their roles.’

You now also have the option to split the role into two – with one person responsible for youth enquiries and the other for potential adult volunteers. A new role: Membership Enquiries Volunteer has now been added to the membership database to accommodate this, adding flexibility to your structure.

Recruit your recruiter!

Why not register a volunteer into one or two of these membership roles in your District? You can do this by emailing the Scout Information Centre at info.centre@scout.org.uk with their name, membership number and the role or by calling 0845 300 1818.
Scouting has always been active across urban and rural areas in the UK. Now we are making real and steady progress in increasing membership in more diverse communities. As the UK becomes more multicultural, Scouting needs to reflect that trend at both the local and County level. Despite some significant changes, particularly in the area of ethnicity and faith, we do still have many groups that do not truly reflect the demographics of their geographical area. That representation only becomes weaker as you move away from the Group level.

**Breaking the stereotype**
Traditionally Scouting is perceived as a white Christian organisation in the UK, which makes it more challenging to attract anyone that falls outside of this stereotype. Key to the changes in our demographic has been the actions of those who manage Scouting. More than ever District Commissioners are being approached by established minority communities who ask how to get involved in Scouting.

**Getting going**
Often those who ask will usually have been running their own type of youth work. By finding out more about the Movement and realising that it is open to them, they often want to change their provision to Scouting. For many communities this is an ideal type of involvement because they know the needs of their community and can therefore cater for them. Also the parents, who may be naturally sceptical of Scouting, are reassured by seeing their faith, culture and practices recognised as important.

Traditionally, members of minority communities have often found it hard to be understood by organisations unfamiliar with their needs. All too often organisations have reinforced the difficulties by saying ‘You can join us but you must behave exactly like us’. In the 21st Century we recognise that everyone has a unique identity. We are not all the same; we have different values, cultures, faiths and practices.

**Shared values**
On an international level Scouting unites Members from over 200 countries who practice different faiths and come from different cultural backgrounds. However all Members are united by being a Scout and sharing the same value system.

The challenge for our society is to embrace the many languages, cultures and faiths of our citizens. We need to use that diversity to make connections across our various communities and to celebrate the differences.
One Movement

Simply by uniting under the common banner of Scouting, people are drawn into a wider community. A District that operates in a multi-cultural area can help build tolerance and understanding through the way it operates and the activities it organises.

Whether you are a Group Scout Leader or a Commissioner, it is likely that there will be times when you will need to learn about the different communities in your changing local population. Above all, you should aim to be flexible in your practices to ensure you are welcoming to all.

Practical steps

District Commissioner, Alan Hands, reveals some of the ways East London has made Scouting more inclusive:

- Be flexible about when you meet - open sections that meet on Saturday or Sunday mornings to fit in with the needs of the local community.
- Be flexible about where you meet – supplement the traditional church hall with other community facilities such as libraries and women’s centres.
- Be flexible on timings for District event – a swimming event held after dark on a Saturday evening will mean more Jewish members can attend.
- Be flexible on dates for events to avoid a clash with major religious festivals.
- Be flexible on where leaders’ meetings take place – not always a pub for example.
- Be flexible in your approach to training – providing new leaders with opportunities to meet a variety of other adults and build a sense of belonging within the District.
- Be flexible with your programme – rather than dropping previously successful events make them more accessible whilst also building in new events reflecting the new communities.
- Build contact with the influential people within the community stressing how we work with young people to develop skills, build a sense of responsibility, and make friends across the wider local community.
- Provide displays and information stands at community events that attract minority groups.

Following this approach we have seen many positive results including an annual membership increase, and a District that recognises that people with different backgrounds, skills, attitudes and experiences that benefit the young people in the area.

more info

FS500011 Opening a new Scout Group or Section
FS185019 Developing Scouting in Minority Ethnic Communities
Both are available from the Scout Information Centre on 0845 300 1818 or email info.centre@scout.org.uk

scouts.org.uk/focus
You spend your time planning, resolving issues and making suggestions and supporting others. But who’s looking after you and your development? The Adult Training Support Team steps forward.

As managers in Scouting, you may think you are the last in line when it comes to personal support. However there are teams of national volunteers across the UK who are there simply to support you in your Scouting role, including the Adult Training Support Team.

Bridging the gaps
This year there has been a real focus on bridging the gaps between the training teams and other managers in Scouting. Increasingly Regional Training Advisers have attended County events, facilitated management training and supported specialised workshops for Local Training Managers and trainer development. The benefits of this approach are clear for everyone. When Regions and Counties work together, training is developed as part of the County and Regional plans, increasing the opportunities for people to learn.

Primarily Regional Training Advisers are there to support the County Training Manager. This benefits your County team as they are able to provide advice and guidance for both experienced and new volunteers in these roles. In many cases the Regional Training Adviser also becomes the Training Adviser for Training Managers, which mean they have someone with training knowledge and contacts to guide them.
Extra support
This year we have had many new volunteers take up the role of Training Manager, and Regional Training Advisers have been there to lend a hand, listen and help facilitate training and development plans. For some new recruits what lies ahead may seem like a daunting task and it’s important for them to know that there are experts who can help, advise and introduce them to other volunteers involved in adult training.

Equally the relationships that Regional Training Advisers have built up with more seasoned Training Managers is vital in helping to motivate them personally and build on the training they provide. It gives commissioners added support, knowing there are other volunteers who can help to support the development of members of their team and the training provision.

‘The team of Regional Training Advisers has really developed well since we started’, says Mike Kerrigan, Chair of the Adult Training Support Team. ‘It is great to see the variety of things that they now do in supporting Training Managers. It is also very pleasing to hear Training Managers speaking enthusiastically about the support they receive.’

If you want to find out who your Regional Training Adviser is, please contact adult.support@scouts.org.uk
Reaching out

One of the first Scout Active Support Units was the team supporting the Apex Challenge in South Yorkshire. Its manager, Matt Richards, explains why it was the perfect solution for them – and the County.

Since 2002, we had been running Apex Challenge events simply as a group of enthusiastic leaders from a number of different Scout Groups. What started as a small-scale local competition has quickly developed and expanded into the national weekend-long adventure events which we now run. Each Apex event attracts hundreds of Explorer Scouts and Network members from across the UK, and the Scout Active Support structure gives us the perfect framework for our organising team.

Recruitment opportunities
Setting up our new Scout Active Support Unit was very straightforward with the support of our County Commissioner, Andy Moore. Our core organising team have taken on the initial roles, but more importantly it has enabled us to encourage others who helped out to now register to be part of The Scout Association. Over the years we’d attracted dozens of helpers – many of whom hadn’t ever been involved in Scouting before. Now they have joined as part of the Apex Challenge Scout Active Support Unit. We’re already planning to help at a number of other County events as well as running our Apex Challenge competitions.

A clear structure
The flexible Scout Active Support format enabled us to maintain control over the event’s finances and also keep our separate charity number (helpful for attracting grants for the event). It also provides us with a clearer idea of how the Apex Challenge now fits into The Scout Association’s structure. With my appointment as Scout Active Support Manager now approved, it gives us more time for the real challenge of planning and expanding our adventurous events.

more info
We’d love to hear updates of your progress towards Scout Active Support. Please email them to active.support@scout.org.uk
For County Commissioner, Andy Moore, the Apex Challenge Scout Active Support Unit is a great asset to County support as Laura McManus discovers.

Managing change

What made you start the transition to Scout Active Support so soon?
We wanted to get started with Scout Active Support as soon as possible; we had a group of adult volunteers who run two events each year. These events attracted new members who need inducting into the Movement. The new Scout Active Support Structure was ideal to fit both our needs.

From my side it was great to tie this group of adults formally into the County. This gives two way support in that they have undertaken to support two County events as well as the Apex Challenge.

Were there any challenges in this process?
We had no significant challenges. We just had a discussion and put all the information on the table. We then had two or three meetings with the key leaders and myself, then a meeting with the County Administrator to address membership and appointments issues.

What are the benefits of having a Scout Active Support Unit in your County?
The main benefit is support for County events from a fresh active group of people. They add flair and excitement to all they deliver.

Can you suggest any top tips for other managers in Scouting about to start the transition from Scout Fellowship to Scout Active Support?
Debate and discuss the move from both sides. It helped us decide the right model for the Unit.
Electronic CRB applications

(England and Wales)

The Scout Association is moving to an electronic application process for CRB checking in England and Wales in 2010. This ‘e-CRB’, which is the term we are using for this electronic process, will allow Appointments Secretaries to submit CRB applications online, reducing postal costs and processing times. It will also provide us with an efficient route to register adults on the Vetting and Barring Scheme when it is implemented in July-November 2010.

The system will be launched to the Movement in late spring/early summer 2010. Further information about timescales and about the support available for the launch will be provided in May 2010, but support is likely to include a combination of face to face workshops, web seminars and downloadable user guides.

Any questions

If you have any questions at this stage, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us at ecrb@scout.org.uk.

Vetting and Barring Scheme

(England, Wales and Northern Ireland)

What is the purpose of the scheme?

The Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS) is designed to ensure that anyone who presents a known risk to vulnerable groups (specifically children and vulnerable adults) is prevented from working with them.

Why has the Government introduced this scheme?

Following the murders of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman by Ian Huntley (a school caretaker) in 2002, the Bichard Inquiry was commissioned. The inquiry’s recommendations led to the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, which recognised the need for a single agency to vet all individuals wanting to work with young people or vulnerable adults. This is the purpose of the Vetting and Barring Scheme.

When will more information become available?

The details of the scheme are still being finalised by the Government. As soon as final guidance has been published, this will be communicated to the Movement. Up to date information will also appear at www.scouts.org.uk/vbs.
Outdoor activities are excellent recruitment opportunities, says UK Chief Commissioner, Wayne Bulpitt. Let’s use them to engage new volunteers.

Over the last few years we have commissioned several pieces of research to help us understand why people choose not to volunteer. The real trick is to show a true picture of what we do – provide excitement, challenge and adventure, as well as being able to overcome these objections. Here are some of the most common.

**Shortage of time**
Sixty-eight per cent of non-volunteers say that they do not volunteer due to a lack of time. There are a number of steps we can take to address this. These may include asking them to help, rather than take on full responsibility at the first step. Alternatively, you could split roles making the time commitment more manageable.

Another idea is to highlight the benefits of volunteering, notably the self-satisfaction as well as the opportunity to learn new skills or participate in other community activities. Probably the very worst approach is the ‘volunteer or we close’ letter or media release which can be very off-putting.

**A perceived lack of skills**
Forty-four per cent of those questioned in the same survey felt that they did not have the right skills to volunteer. The additional time adults spend with us during residential experiences (such as The Big Adventure) and other outdoor activities provides an ideal opportunity to communicate the diverse range of skills that we need.

**Not being asked**
Strangely enough, this is the third most frequently cited reason for not volunteering. Some 18% of non-volunteers who would like to volunteer said that they have not heard about the opportunities or had never been asked!

Similarly, parents invited to help at regular section meetings often say that they do not feel properly used, and are often left bored by the evening. Clearly the easiest of these barriers to overcome by simply ensuring that you ask all potential volunteers for their assistance and give out clear roles when they are with you.

These observations may seem obvious, however you may be surprised how many times they crop up in conversations with parents and other potential volunteers. Remember, if you don’t ask, you don’t get!

Follow Wayne’s activities and share comments by visiting his blog at www.scouts.org.uk/ccblog
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