

A GUIDE TO...
**OPENING A NEW
SCOUT GROUP OR
SECTION.**

INTRODUCTION

More young people than ever are enjoying Scouting. This increase in membership numbers also means we have more Sections and Groups to help deliver adventure to the UK's young people.

This document is a guide to best practice for anyone considering opening a new Section or Group. It also includes useful links to all the factsheets, resources and online help available.

We hope you find it useful.

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COMMUNITY

It is very important that we take every opportunity to investigate thoroughly what resources, including help from adults, are available from the local community. The key to this is to actively engage local community groups and show them what they can gain from being involved in Scouting. Let people know that Scouting offers 200 activities and has half a million members (including 60,000 girls) and that it offers everyday adventure to young people and adult volunteers.

Key members of the community

The more people you talk to, the more potential volunteers you have. Start with key people in the community who will know who to approach. Asking for help is easier for people understand the benefits of Scouting to their community. It might be good to use the promotional video [Think You Know Scouting? Think Again](#).

Selling Scouting

Use the [Scout brand centre](#) for advice on promotional material. You'll find ready to use templates, text and images for a whole variety of purposes.

Further advice and information can also be found at the [online media centre](#)

The [Making the Most of Promotional Posters and Postcards factsheet \(FS3310561\)](#) may also be useful. And there is an ongoing training package, [Effective Recruiter Training](#) for anyone involved in face-to-face recruitment of adults and young people.

Find a venue

The venue will depend on what Sections you are planning to open. Think long term, for future growth and remember storage – what kit will the Group/Section need?

Adult leaders and helpers

Who do key community members know that might become involved in Scouting? Go through the tasks that need doing rather than roles that need filling. You could hold a [name generation evening \(FS500010\)](#)

Don't forget ex Members of Scouting. A list of those who were past volunteers in your District can be downloaded from the membership services system.

Find out more about recruiting, appointing and reviewing in the [Member resources area](#) of [Scouts.org.uk](#).

Executive members

The Executive Committee have an important role in supporting the Group financially and administratively.

For more information about the kind of support you can download the [Executive Committee in the Executive Committee support factsheet \(FS331014\)](#).

For more information on the key roles of chairman, treasurer and secretary see the following resources:

- [A Guide For The Group Chairman – Role, duties and key information \(BS310022\)](#)
- [Supporting The Group Treasurer – A guide to the role \(BS310021\)](#)
- [A Guide For The Group Secretary – Role, duties and key information \(BS310020\)](#)

Useful information, such as CC3 The Essential Trustee and CC30 Finding New Trustees is also available from [charitycommission.gov.uk](#) (England and Wales) or [www.charitycommissionni.gov.uk](#) (Northern Ireland). For those in Scotland a useful resource [Guidelines for Charity Trustees](#) can be found at [www.oscr.org.uk](#)

Community inclusion

Where the community is faith or culturally based it may be a good idea to arrange for Community Inclusion Training. Further information can be obtained from email: diversity@scouts.org.uk Useful websites include the Muslim Scout Fellowship [www.ukmsf.org](#) For further assistance in Northern Ireland please contact info@scoutsni.com ; in Scotland - shq@scouts-scotland.org.uk ; and in Wales – admin@scoutswales.org.uk

DISTRICT

Although we should look to the community to provide as many resources, including people, as possible, many members of the District will be needed to support the process as they will be integral to it. Maybe an existing Assistant Leader would like the challenge of opening and leading a new Section? The Adult Training Team needs to be able to deal with an influx of new adults. Groups/sections should be willing to let new adults come and visit them and all adult members should be aware that how they act or what they say can have a huge impact on how Scouting is viewed. To do this try to ensure that from the earliest opportunity all adults have 'bought in' to the process of opening this new Group/Section and are happy to support the process.

Community Inclusion Training may also be of help.

Scout Active Support and Scout Network

What could the local Scout Active Support or Scout Network do to support the new Group or Section?

What is Scout Active Support? (FS330098) gives more information on Scout Active Support. You can also find out more about what Scout Active Support and Scout Network can do for you on [Scouts.org.uk](https://scouts.org.uk)

Identify a mentor

Has someone in the District already expressed an interest to support the new Group/Section with advice and information? If so it is important that where relevant they understand any faith or cultural issues. Perhaps they could act as Group Scout Leader, even for the first year to provide the Group with that core of Scouting knowledge.

Support through the appointment process

It is important that all new volunteers are supported through the appointment process.

Explain the steps and why they are important. Useful resources on the [appointment process](https://scouts.org.uk) can be found on [Scouts.org.uk](https://scouts.org.uk)

Complete the 'Getting Started' training

Make sure the Adult Training Team are able to support the new volunteers. New volunteers need to be helped through the system and not left to go through it alone. Ensure Training Advisors are aware of their responsibilities and importance in supporting the new adults.

New adults visiting existing Groups/Sections

Actively engage anyone interested in supporting the new Group/Section by suggesting appropriate visits and opportunities to help with existing Groups/Sections. That way they can see local Scouting in action and develop a taste for it.

PRACTICAL ISSUES

There are a number of practical issues that need to be considered and which can make a real difference to successfully starting and maintaining a new Group/Section.

Finance and administration

How many young people are needed to make the Group/Section viable? What should the cost to parents be? When and how will the money be collected?

Members of the Executive Committee will be well placed to advise on what families locally can afford. Grants to support individual members in financial hardship may be available, along with some general start up costs.

[HQ Grants to support local Scouting \(FS103946\)](#) gives more information about HQ Grants. You can also find out more about [HQ Grants](#) on [Scouts.org.uk](https://scouts.org.uk)

Administrative processes need to be put in place, such as a charity bank account with two signatories. Gift Aid is also very useful to have. You can find out more about [finance and administration](#) on [Scouts.org.uk](https://scouts.org.uk)

Equipment

What equipment and resources will the Group/Section need for the short term whilst starting up? What could be obtained as a donation from local businesses? Perhaps a grant could be obtained? The Executive Committee is there to make sure the Group/Sections has the resources it needs to fulfil the programme.

Programme support

Often new leaders' biggest worry is the programme. This is where the District team and other relevant adults can make a huge difference by programme planning with the new adults.

There are many resources available to help, including the programme resources available from [Scout Shops](#), sectional supplements and [Programmes Online \(POL\)](#).

Group/Section registration

Where a completely new Group/Section is being started the prospective Group Scout Leader, or Section Leader (if the Group will consist of a single Section), should apply to the District Commissioner to register the new Group/Section using [Form C](#). Information can also be found in Policy Organisation and Rules, 3.17.

PARENTS

Research has shown that 40-45% of new adult volunteers in Scouting come from parents of youth members or prospective youth members. Research has also shown that parent rotas are a particularly effective method of getting parents initially involved. Residential events such as camps were identified as offering 'tipping points' in converting informal, limited involvement into a more formalised, committed association. We therefore need to see parents as potentially one of our best sources of adult help.

Schools

Most schools are more than happy to invite Scouting in to speak to their pupils. Make contact and remember that it will be a great asset to build a good working relationship with the school and the headteacher. An assembly presentation is a good idea – something upbeat and exciting, but remember to have the right person doing it as this can make all the difference. Think about timing in the school year as your message could lose impetus if you visit just before the summer holidays. Don't forget a flyer that pupils can take home with them for their parents to see.

Engage with parents

Once you have a group of interested young people, it is time to speak to their parents.

This is a prime opportunity to sell Scouting and its volunteering opportunities. A useful resource is [The No-Nonsense Parents Guide to Scouting](#). Printed copies are also available from the Scout Information Centre.

An open night/taster session is a great opportunity to speak to parents and gives the young people a chance to try some Scouting activities.

Follow up any offers to help promptly. Ask people what they enjoy doing and what time they have available. You can find out more about getting parents involved in the [Information and Resources area of Scouts.org.uk](#)

A welcome pack

Often parents will not really understand how Scouting works and sometimes this prevents them from getting involved, or even knowing that help is needed. A welcome pack does not have to be very long – in fact the shorter the better. Your aim should simply be to explain how the Group is run, the types of roles that need filling and tasks that need doing. Don't forget to include who they should contact if they want to get involved. You can find more about how to put together a welcome pack in the [Information and Resources area of Scouts.org.uk](#)

Current youth groups in your community

Some communities, particularly faith or culturally based ones often already have youth groups which they wish to make part of Scouting. In this instance you need to consider age ranges, speaking to parents and running taster sessions so that young people and their parents can see what Scouting has to offer.

Programme

Remember to involve the parents in the programme by providing them with the term's programme and inviting them to support the activities depending on their skills and interests.

Parent rotas can be an excellent way of getting parents involved, and if they enjoy themselves enough you may be able to encourage them to take on a volunteering role. You can find out more on parent rotas in the [Information and Resources area of Scouts.org.uk](#). It is important to remember that a great programme attracts young people, giving you a wider pool of parents to involve. In the early days consider a bring a friend night. If the programme is good it's a great way to grow a Group/Section.

School playground

Never underestimate how useful a playground contact can be, particularly for the younger Sections. Could a parent take on the role of playground contact?

...READY TO GO

Now everything is ready to go. This is a good time to get publicity by inviting the local press, community leaders and civic dignitaries to celebrate. It doesn't have to be the very first meeting of the Group/Section – a special event with some activities added for young people might put less pressure on any new leaders and give the opportunity for a party to celebrate.

Plan

Whatever event you plan to launch the new Group/Section should be planned in plenty of time with all the relevant adults involved. People need to know what they are expected to do both beforehand and during the event. This way everyone can enjoy themselves and get off to the best possible start.

Activities

Whether it is activities for the first meeting or for a launch event, look through the programme resources. What is realistic, relevant and interesting? Be aware that these three things are crucial as to whether a young person will continue to enjoy Scouting into the future. A good programme with great activities and games will capture their imagination, not to mention new volunteers. Don't forget to use [Programmes Online](#).

The future

What does the future hold? Might new Sections be a possibility? It may be a new Beaver Colony now, but in about a year is there the possibility of a new Cub Pack to meet the need of those moving on from the Colony? Or is there a need for a second Section to meet the demand for a particular age group? It might be helpful to have a development plan.

You can find advice on [how to support the future of a new Section](#) on [Scouts.org.uk](#) or contact the Regional Development Service in England at:

rds@scouts.org.uk

Elsewhere in the UK please contact

Northern Ireland - info@scoutsni.com

Scotland - shq@scouts-scotland.org.uk

Wales - admin@scoutswales.org.uk

Thank you

Don't forget to thank everyone involved for all the work they have put in to getting the new Group/Section started. Saying thank you can go a long way to ensuring continued support and goodwill. A small gift is a nice gesture and various Scouting thank you cards are available from [the Scout Information Centre](#).

Continued support

Don't forget that the new Group/Section will need ongoing support and the new adults need to know where to go for advice. The Scout Information Centre, [scouts.org.uk](#), factsheets and other resources are all really useful, but nothing is quite as reassuring as good local support.

In time the level of support required will drop as confidence and knowledge grow, but remember that regular review is the best way to ensure the new Group continues to flourish.

Although in some parts of the British Isles, Scout Counties are known as Areas or Islands – and in one case Bailiwick – for ease of reading this resource simply refers to County/Counties. In Scotland there is no direct equivalent to County or Area. In Scotland Scouting is organised into Districts and Regions, each with distinct responsibilities. Some 'County' functions are the responsibility of Scottish Regions, whilst others lie with Scottish Districts. The focus of responsibility is outlined in Scottish Variations from POR.

You're raring to go, but how do you get hold of the factsheets and resources to further support you in setting up your new Scout Group? Find out below.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The Scout brand centre

This is the central resource for all those producing Scouting communications and promoting Scouting's everyday adventure. You can find the Scout brand centre at scouts.org.uk/brand

Resources you will find in the Scout brand centre include:

- Think You Know Scouting? Think Again (Video).

Member resources area

In the member resources area of Scouts.org.uk you'll find out how to set up and run a Scout Group, including a wealth of factsheets. You can find Information and Resources at scouts.org.uk/support

Resources you will find in Member resources include:

- Effective Recruiter Training
- Making the Most of Promotional Posters and Postcards factsheet (FS3310561)
- Recruiting adults – Running a Name Generation Evening (FS500010)
- Executive Committee Support (FS331014)
- A Guide For The Group Chairman – Role, Duties And Key Information (BS310022)
- Supporting The Group Treasurer – A Guide to the Role (BS310021)
- A Guide For The Group Secretary – Role, Duties And Key Information (BS310020)
- What is Scout Active Support? (FS330098)
- HQ Grants to Support Local Scouting (FS103946)
- The No Nonsense Parents Guide to Scouting
- Form C

Factsheets and publications can also be requested from the Scout Information Centre. Call 0845 300 1818 or email info.centre@scouts.org.uk for more information.

Scout media centre

This is Scouting's online media centre and is a good place to go for tips on promoting local Scouting. You can find the Scout media centre at scouts.org.uk/media

Programmes Online

Programmes Online is Scouting's award winning online programme planner full of activities and ideas. You can find Programmes Online at scouts.org.uk/pol