

Integrated Sections Beaver, Cub and Scout Sections



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Scouting works well through Sections where there are sufficient young people within the Sectional age group. But what about when there are too few young people? Conventional Sections may be difficult to establish where:

- there are too few young people in a rural area to sustain separate Sections;
- a new Scout Group is starting up and there is uncertainty as to whether there will be sufficient numbers for Sections to exist alone in the first instance;
- a new Scout Group is starting up and there is uncertainty among the adults volunteering "to help" over which role or age group they wish to work in;
- a Scout Group wishes to start the 'next' Section and there are only a few Members ready to 'go up';
- a Scout Group has declining numbers of young people and Sections need to combine;
- a Scout Group meets on the same evening, or is suffering from a lack of Leaders, and arranges overlapping meeting times.

Sometimes conventional Sections with small numbers are established where there are sufficient Leaders. In many more, no provision is made because the limited number of young people and/or adults is perceived as "not enough". Working outside the Movement's traditional Sectional structures enables us to better meet the needs of young people and the communities in which they live, and to take a pragmatic view of the circumstances we find ourselves in.

This can be achieved with an Integrated Section - where young people from two or more Sectional age groups meet together - on a temporary or permanent basis. It is designed to meet local needs and requires the local leadership to possess a range of skills needed to handle a flexible way of working.

The District Commissioner may approve alternative arrangements for Members to meet regularly in their own localities, meeting less frequently as a Section. Detailed guidelines on the operation of Sections with small numbers are available from the Information Centre at Gilwell Park.

In special circumstances [such as when starting a new Scout Group or in a rural area] the District Commissioner may authorise a Scout Group to operate without distinct Sections, providing Members take part in the Programme appropriate to the Sectional age range. The authorisation should be reviewed every year.

Policy, Organisation and Rules, Rule 3.11 Section Flexibility states:

An Integrated Section may consist of Beaver Scouts and/or Cub Scouts and/or Scouts who work together as one Section.

Note: an integrated Beaver Scout / Cub Scout Section should not meet for more than two hours.

An Integrated Section may only be established with the prior approval of the District Commissioner.

Members of Integrated Sections take part in a Balanced Programme, make the Promise and wear the uniform appropriate to their Sectional age group.

The Scout Association

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The operation of Integrated Sections must take account of the guidelines available from the Information Centre at Gilwell Park.

Leaders, Assistant Leaders and Section Assistants appointed to the Group need not hold Section specific appointments. The Leader of an Integrated Section is responsible for the training of Beavers Scouts, Cub Scouts and Scouts [as appropriate] subject to the general supervision of the Group Scout Leader with the assistance of Assistant Leaders, Section Assistants and Skills Instructors whose responsibilities are specified by the Leader.

Various practical considerations need to be made before embarking on such an arrangement. These are explored in the rest of this material. But what of the benefits to such an approach? These are:

- increased retention and ease of transfer between 'Sections'
- increased provision, more appropriate to local circumstances;
- Leaders have increased understanding of the Association's Programme for 6-14 year olds, with a real opportunity to put it into practice;
- young people are able to continue to work in their chosen interest and peer groups;
- a flexible way of recruiting adult volunteers without the need to assign them to specific roles in the initial stages of forming a Scout Group;
- a more flexible leadership team able to work with different age groups as local circumstances and the programme demand.

Rural Areas

Rural communities tend to be small and can't always sustain conventional Sections. In the rural situation where, for example, the population of a small village is only enough to provide three Beaver Scouts, six Cub Scouts and four Scouts, there are simply insufficient numbers of young people, within the Sectional age groups to warrant separate Sections, each with two or more adults.

A more suitable approach is to establish an Integrated Section.

Due to the likelihood of there being fewer adults from which to recruit your adult support, it is also better to make the most effective use of it.

Within rural areas the available population will fluctuate as young people move through the age ranges or migrate. So your three Beaver Scouts, six Cub Scouts and four Scouts may soon become one Beaver Scout, five Cub Scouts and seven Scouts! Leaders need to work across the age ranges and be flexible enough to cope with the changing demands and needs, both in terms of leadership style and programme delivery. They also need to complete training appropriate to the Sections they are working with.

In one development project the village school had just 13 boys and 12 girls aged between 6 and 11 years. After local research and promotion eight joined as Beaver Scouts, 12 as Cub Scouts and two as Scouts. A team of new Leaders, working across all age groups, helped to sustain a new Group with an Integrated Section.

In another project there were sufficient young people to form a separate Beaver Scout Colony, with an Integrated Section being formed for the Cub Scout and Scout age range.

Geographical considerations may affect the nature of provision in rural areas.

Starting a New Scout Group

When starting a new Scout Group there may be uncertainty as to how many young people will want to join, and in which age group they will fall. Keep your options open by allowing all young people within the three Sectional age ranges to meet together for a few weeks. This gives Leaders time to organise them into Sections and small groups.

There may be insufficient numbers for Sections to exist alone in the first instance but as word gets round the numbers will increase, so making conventional Sections more feasible.

Parents and other adults who volunteer "to help" may be reluctant to commit themselves to an

appointment if unsure of what is entailed. By giving them time to understand what it means to be a Leader, Assistant Leader or Section Assistant and to experience the different Sectional age groups they will be more prepared to commit themselves to a formal appointment. They may even conclude it wasn't as difficult as they thought it would be!

The District Team - and others supporting this new venture - also have an opportunity to see the natural leadership abilities emerge from those helping, as well as their individual skills, thus enabling the right person to have the appointment most suited to them.

In one development project meetings were initially organised to cater for all children aged 6-14 years without distinct Sections. New Leaders worked across the Sectional age groups until they decided which age group they wanted to work with. Separate Sections were later established.

In some cases the flexibility of Leaders working across all Sectional age groups has been maintained while conventional Sections have become established.

Starting a New Section

An existing Scout Group without the 'next' Section will inevitably have poor retention of Members. Transferring to another Group is one possibility. It can be a daunting prospect for many. Transport, geographical and social considerations may also prevent transfer.

Some Groups consider starting their own 'next' Section when there is a small group of Members ready to 'go up'. Finding a new Section Leader may be difficult. Existing Leaders may be reluctant to transfer Sections, at least initially.

In one development project a group of older Cub Scouts were ready to transfer to a Scout Troop. No Troop existed within the Group. The solution was to form a Scout Patrol. They continued to meet with the Cub Scout Pack, working on their own Patrol activities. The Cub Scout Leader acted as Scout Leader. The Assistant Cub Scout Leaders took on the running of the Pack,

confident that the Cub Scout Leader was on hand. A sensible solution for all concerned.

Declining Sections and Groups

A Group suffering from declining numbers of young people, or where there is a lack of Leaders, may need to combine Sections temporarily. This can only be an interim measure before either expansion back into conventional Sections or ultimate closure. The causes of decline need to be investigated and resolved.

In areas where the young population has grown up and moved on, an existing Scout Group may well be in the wrong place. It could move to a new location or close. These are difficult decisions and forming an Integrated Section is unlikely to prevent the inevitable.

Where there are sufficient young people but a lack of Leaders, the existing Leadership may take on the running of two or more Sections. This is hard work for those involved and should only be a 'last resort' solution. Overlapping meeting times may help if all Section meetings need to take place on the same evening in the same building. Problems in recruiting sufficient Leaders need to be addressed. Integrated Sections is not an excuse for not having sufficient Leaders and the situation needs reviewing on more than an "annual basis" if lack of Leaders is the reason for the Integrated Section.

Leadership

What kind of person is needed to run an Integrated Section? They should, in addition to the usual leadership qualities, have the ability to:

- change leadership styles appropriate to young peoples' ages;
- relate to different age groups (e.g. 6-14);
- provide resources for the complete age range (e.g. from handicraft materials to a car engine);
- manage two or more Sectional Balanced Programmes.

The responsibilities of Leaders within an Integrated Section will be similar to those for Sectional Leaders.

The 'Section' Leader maintains an overview of the Balanced Programme, Awards and Badges appropriate to the Sectional age groups with which they are working; ensuring the programme takes account of these and the different methods appropriate to each age group. Assistant Leaders may work in a similar way or be responsible for a particular Sectional age group. They might stay with that age group or follow the Members as they move through the Sectional programmes.

For an Integrated Section there needs to be a Section Leader and at least one other adult, preferably a number of Assistant Leaders and Helpers. The Section Leader's appointment will be non Section specific. Terms such as Cub Scout Leader will not apply.

Assistant Section Leaders may have Section specific appointments depending on how the leadership team is organised. Terms such as Assistant Beaver Scout Leader may not apply. Leadership application forms should state "Section Leader" or "Assistant Section Leader" "(Integrated Section)".

Traditional leadership names, such as "Akela" or "Skip" may be considered inappropriate for an Integrated Section. Use other Scouting names or Leaders' first names.

Leader Training

When adults in an Integrated Section complete a Personal Learning Plan as part of their training, their Training Adviser needs to take account of the fact they are in an Integrated Section

Membership

Members of Integrated Sections undertake the Balanced Programme, Awards and Badges, and make the Promise and wear the uniform appropriate to their Sectional age group.

Section Organisation

Where possible, organise young people into Beaver Scout Lodges, Cub Scout Sixes and Scout Patrols as appropriate. This assists with the delivery of the Balanced Programme and helps create peer groups. Integrated Lodges/Sixes and Patrols (perhaps called Dens) may be needed if young people don't fall into neat groups of about six!

When working with mixes of age groups you need to try to ensure that all age groups have an appropriate peer group of about four young people. Two 14 year old Scouts mixing with 15 Cub Scouts will not stay long if they are not offered challenging activities appropriate to their age range - with peers and with appropriate leadership styles. Sometimes its not possible to get a balance of ages - but at all times we should be providing a Balanced Programme appropriate to the ages of the young people involved - with suitable leadership styles.

Colony, Pack and Troop Forums will be difficult to organise. The crucial point, however, is to provide other ways for Sixers, Patrol Leaders and older members of each Section to be actively involved in decision making and having real responsibility for running activities, both within the Integrated Section and their individual Lodges/Sixes/Patrols.

All young people should have opportunities to make real choices and decisions in the programme rather than act in deference to Leaders' decisions. Don't be afraid to delegate to younger Members.

This may cause some difficulty among younger Members who see older ones allowed to do things they are not. Conversely, older Members may resent constraints on their freedom by Leaders applying controls more appropriate to younger Members. Think it through, develop ground rules appropriate to each age group and be consistent in their application. Explain these and the reasons for them, to all concerned.

At all times you need to maintain Leader-young person ratios appropriate to age groups. For Beaver Scouts there should be at least 2 adults

for regular indoor meetings and a ratio of 1 adult to 6 Beaver Scouts plus the Leader in charge for outdoor activities and Sleepovers. For Cub Scouts, again, there should be at least 2 adults for regular indoor meetings and a ratio of 1 adult to 8 Cub Scouts plus the Leader in charge for outdoor activities and residential experiences. If, during the course of an evening meeting, age groups split up in order to undertake activities appropriate to the age group, then appropriate Leader ratios need to be maintained during these periods. This might mean you need more adults throughout the whole meeting.

Meeting Structure and Ceremonies

Conventional Sections have their own traditional ways of opening and closing meetings with the Beaver Scout Section having a wider variety than others. Use of the traditional 'Grand Howl' is by no means universal. The purpose of these are to bring people together, create a sense of order, welcome or wish people well, reflect on what has happened during the meeting. Devise something suitable which achieves this and is appropriate for the age range; or combine traditional ceremonies. Avoid using just one ceremony associated with a particular Section.

Investiture ceremonies can assume a common format although all Beaver Scouts should recite the Promise together.

'Going up' ceremonies can be used as an occasion when, for example, a Cub Scout moves to the Scout Section, they make the Scout Promise and celebrate their achievements as a Cub Scout.

Balanced Programme

It is important to allow time within meetings for each Sectional age group to undertake activities appropriate to their age and from their respective Balanced Programme. Common themes can be used. Avoid programmes where the lowest common denominator is used. Older Members will soon get bored and leave.

Some aspects of Programme development and co-ordination are easier with an Integrated

Section. Managing two or more sets of Awards and Badges can be more difficult. The key point is to ensure individual Members' progression through the relevant programme and provide quality Scouting relevant to the age of each Member.

Ensure Leaders spend an appropriate amount of time with each age group. Avoid being 'captured' by any one particular age group because of the demands they make. Assigning Leaders to particular age groups helps. Sectional District events may cause some difficulty if they exclude some Members within the Integrated Section. All Section events eliminate this.

Leaders experienced in one particular Section must ensure they don't run an Integrated Section as an extension of the Section they are used to. The needs and the Section programme for all Sectional age groups should be catered for.

Leaders new to a particular Section programme can seek the support and advice of Assistant District Commissioners (Section) who can advise accordingly.

Peer Groups

Small groups of mixed ages might suddenly be affected by the arrival of newcomers. Brothers and sisters tag along. Existing Members bring their friends. Others learn something good is happening. With a change in the ages of the group the inclinations, language, climate and dynamics change too. The programme needs to be reconsidered and modified.

One development project working with an Integrated Section (for 8 to 14 year olds) found that young people moved in and out of mutual interest and peer groups according to the activities they wished to undertake and the friendships forged. They recognised this may involve them working with those younger, older or of a similar age to themselves. This approach can work well in an Integrated Section with this age range.

One factor influencing poor retention is the transfer of Members between conventional

Sections. Leaving their peer group, creating new friends, coping with change and the 'king pin' to 'nobody' syndrome all contribute. The worst effects of transfer are avoided within an Integrated Section, with increased retention. This will diminish, however, if there is no effective management of the Programme (see above).

Young people need to experience the development of social relationships and skills with new peer groups. Occasionally changing the make up of Lodges/Sixes/Patrols as new Members join or as they move to another Scheme can help achieve this.

Consider how young people change peer groups in mixed age activity; what pressures there are on young people to stay with their original peer group or move on to a new peer group; and how does this process affect relationships between young people themselves and with their Leaders.

There can be a tendency to use older Members in a leadership or training role with younger Members. Occasionally this may be appropriate. Consider carefully what proportion of time is spent this way.

Group Management

A Group Scout Leader's responsibilities for the Programme and Section co-ordination are less than that for a conventional Group. If the Integrated Section is a temporary measure, or if numbers grow to an extent that separate Sections become necessary, the Group Scout Leader has an important role in establishing the new Sections.

Where the only Section in the Group is an Integrated Section, Group Scouters' Meetings and Sectional Leaders' Meetings can be combined.

Irrespective of the number or make up of Sections within a Group, there will always be a need for an effective Group Executive Committee.

Safety and Insurance

Always be mindful of safety, using games and activities appropriate to the ages involved. Avoid situations where a twelve year old Scout is

knocking into a six year old Beaver Scout in active games. The consequences are obvious.

Buildings with a large hall and two or three small rooms available for group work are ideal. Consider other facilities, space, materials, furniture and toilets.

Groups operating an Integrated Section only have adequate insurance cover if approved by the District Commissioner as detailed in Policy, Organisation and Rules.

Further Information

Further advice and information on Integrated Sections is available from the Programme and Development Department at Gilwell Park.

Case studies of successful projects are also available from the Programme and Development Department.

Further advice on Programme, adult support and Leader Training is available from the Programme and Development Department at Gilwell Park.