

Chapter 2 KEY POLICIES

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The order of Key Policies in this section infers no order of importance nor priority; they are all equal.

The Religious Policy

The Scout Movement includes Members of many different faiths and religions as well as those with no formal religion. The following policy has received the approval of the heads of the leading religious bodies in the United Kingdom. All Members of the Movement are encouraged to:

- make every effort to progress in the understanding and observance of the Promise to do their best to do their duty to God or to uphold Scouting's values as appropriate;
- explore their faith, beliefs and attitudes
- consider belonging to some faith or religious body;
- carry into daily practice what they profess.

Attendance at services

If a Scout Group, Explorer Scout Unit or Scout Network is composed of members of several denominations, religions or beliefs, the young people should be encouraged to attend services relevant to their own form of religion or belief.

Chaplains

Chaplains may be appointed as Advisers in Scout Groups, Districts, Counties, Countries and Nationally. A Chaplain may be a Minister of Religion or a lay person.

In a Scout Group sponsored by a religious body the religious leader may be appointed Group Chaplain.

National Chaplains may be appointed for religious bodies represented in Scouting.

Rule 2.1 Responsibilities within the Religious Policy

- a. The District Commissioner or the County Commissioner, as appropriate, must be satisfied that all applicants for Leader or Commissioner appointments are fully aware that they will be required by their personal example to implement the Association's religious policy.

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- b. If a Sponsored Group has a policy of recruitment restricted to members of one particular form of religion or denomination, the Sponsoring Authority is responsible for the religious training of all young people in the Group.
- c. In this case it is the duty of the Group Scout Leader to encourage attendance at such religious instruction and observances as the Sponsoring Authority may consider desirable.
- d. Scouts' Own Services may be held for the purpose of spiritual reflection and to promote a fuller understanding of the significance of the Scout Promise and Law.
- e. Such services must be regarded as supplementary to, rather than a substitute for, formal attendance at the services of the individual's own form of religion.
- f. If a Beaver Scout, Cub Scout, Scout, Explorer Scout or Scout Network Member is not allowed, by reasons of the individual's own religious obligations, to attend acts of worship other than that of the individual's own faith, the Leader must make certain that those obligations are not compromised.

The Equal Opportunities Policy

Young People

The Scout Association is part of a worldwide educational youth movement. The values, which underpin and inspire its work are embodied in the Scout Promise and Law and in the Purpose of the Association.

Within this framework, the Association is committed to equality of opportunity for all young people.

Accordingly:

- a. The Scout Association is committed to extending Scouting, its Purpose and Method to young people in all parts of society.
- b. No young person should receive less favourable treatment on the basis of, nor suffer disadvantage by reason of:
 - Class or socio-economic status;
 - ethnic origin, nationality (or statelessness) or race;
 - gender (including gender reassignment);
 - marital or civil partnership status;
 - sexual orientation;
 - disability (including mental or physical ability);
 - political belief;
 - pregnancy;
 - religion or belief (including the absence of belief)

All Members of the Movement should seek to practise that equality, especially in promoting access to Scouting for all young people. The Scout Association opposes all forms of prejudice and discrimination, including racism, sexism, and homophobia. All Scout Groups, as independent charities, have a duty to comply with relevant equalities legislation. All volunteers should make reasonable adjustments where possible to support all young people with disabilities to access Scouting.

Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments means actions to enable young people with disabilities to access Scouting and Scouting activities, as far as reasonably possible, to the same level as young people without disabilities. This should involve working in partnership with parents/carers, to identify needs

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and support strategies. Reasonable steps should also be taken to identify any young people with disabilities in the Section/Group.

(See Rule 3.11b for further guidance around reasonable adjustments).

Further information about equalities legislation and Scouting is available via the members area of the website.

Note: With reference to gender, membership of the youth Sections of the Association is open to boys and girls, and young women and young men of the appropriate ages subject to the rules set out in 3.6, 4.6 and 5.6 below.

Leaders and other volunteers

To carry out its work the Association seeks to appoint effective and appropriate Leaders, and to involve other volunteers in supporting roles, all of whom are required to accept fully the responsibilities of their commitment.

The overriding considerations in making all appointments in Scouting shall be the safety and security of young people, and their continued development in accordance with the Purpose and Values of the Association.

Accordingly, all those whom the Movement accepts as volunteers must be appropriate persons to undertake the duties of the particular position to which they have been appointed (including, if relevant, meeting the requirements of the Sponsoring Authority) and, where appropriate, the responsibilities of membership.

In making an appointment to a particular leadership or support position it may be appropriate to consider the gender and/or ethnicity of the potential appointee, in particular to ensure appropriate composition of leadership or supporting teams.

The physical and mental ability of a particular potential appointee to fulfil a particular role will always be a relevant factor to consider.

Within these constraints, and those imposed by the need to ensure:

- the safety and security of young people;
- the continued development of young people; and
- equal opportunities for all;

no person volunteering their services should receive less favourable treatment on the basis of, nor suffer disadvantage by reason of:

- age;
- class or socio-economic status;
- ethnic origin, nationality (or statelessness) or race;
- gender (including gender reassignment);
- marital or civil partnership status;
- sexual orientation;
- disability (including mental or physical ability);
- political belief;
- pregnancy;
- religion or belief (including the absence of belief)

Note: Sexual feelings directed towards children and/or a sexual interest in children is a bar to any involvement in the Scout Movement.

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Rule 2.2 Responsibilities within the Equal Opportunities Policy

All adults in Scouting have a responsibility for the operation of the Association's Equal Opportunities Policy. All Scout Groups, as independent charities have a duty to comply with relevant equalities legislation.

- a. The District Commissioner or the County Commissioner, as appropriate, must be satisfied that all applicants for Leader or Commissioner appointments are fully aware that they will be required by their personal example to operate the Association's Equal Opportunities Policy and support Groups to comply with relevant equalities legislation.
- b. They must also be satisfied that all those whom they invite to assist them in other ways in the work of the District or County are upholding the Association's Equal Opportunities Policy by the personal example that they set before the Scouts in the District or County as the case may be.
- c. Group Scout Leaders must be satisfied that all those whom they invite to assist them in the work of the Group will comply with relevant equalities legislation and uphold the Association's Equal Opportunities Policy by the personal example that they set before the Scouts in the Group.
- d. Appointment Advisory Committees are required to operate the Association's Equal Opportunities Policy and comply with relevant equalities legislation in their work.
- e. The District Executive or the County Executive Committee, as appropriate, must be satisfied that all applicants for appointments in their gift are fully aware that they will be required by their personal example to operate the Association's Equal Opportunities Policy and support Groups to comply with relevant equalities legislation.

Further information about equalities legislation and Scouting is available via the members area of the website.

The Safety Policy

It is the policy of The Scout Association to provide Scouting in a safe manner without risk to health, so far as is reasonably practicable.

The Association believes that this responsibility ranks equally with the other responsibilities incumbent upon those providing Scouting activities and functions.

It is the responsibility of all those involved in Scouting to seek, so far as is reasonably practicable, to ensure that:

- all activities are conducted in a safe manner without risk to the health of participants;
- the provision and maintenance of equipment and buildings for Members and others is safe and without risk to health and adequate for their welfare;
- information, instruction, training and supervision is provided with the object of ensuring the health and safety of all those involved in Scouting activities or who may be affected by them;
- appropriate arrangements are made to ensure safety and the absence of risks to health in connection with the use, transport, storage and handling of equipment, and substances which are inherently or potentially dangerous.

Rule 2.3 Responsibilities within the Safety Policy

- a. All persons involved with Scouting are responsible for the operation of the Association's Safety Policy.
- b. It is the responsibility of all persons to ensure that:
 - they do not endanger the health and safety of themselves or others;
 - they observe the rules established for the safety of those involved in Scouting activities.
- c. The Local responsibility for the management of the Safety Policy of the Association rests with the appropriate County, District or Group Executive Committee together with the appropriate County Commissioner, District Commissioner or Group Scout Leader.

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- d. The District or County Commissioner, as appropriate, must be satisfied that all applicants for adult appointments are fully aware that they will be required by their personal example to implement the Association's Safety Policy.
- e. Group Scout Leaders must be satisfied that all those whom they invite to assist them in the work of the Scout Group are competent persons to carry out the tasks given to them and are aware of their responsibilities under the Association's Safety Policy.
- f. Counties may choose to designate one or more Safety Co-ordinators to assist the County Commissioner and the County Executive Committee in the implementation of the Safety Policy within the County and shall assist District Commissioners in operating the policy.
- g. When District or County Commissioners do not renew, or when they cancel appointments because the holder has not acted in accordance with the Association's Safety Policy, they must inform the Vetting Team at Headquarters, in writing, of the reasons for the termination of the appointment.

The Vetting Policy

It is the policy of The Scout Association to check all adult volunteers to ensure that: only adults appropriate for a role are permitted to undertake responsibilities in Scouting; and that regular reviews are undertaken of adult volunteers to ensure their continued suitability.

Accordingly The Scout Association is committed to:

- following a defined process for appointing adult volunteers that establishes the applicant's suitability taking into account the fundamentals of Scouting; the Child Protection Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, Safety Policy and the Equal Opportunities Policy;
- Refusing offers from applicants that are found to be unsuitable;
- Putting in place robust vetting arrangements and ensuring that these arrangements are made clear to applicants and to the public;
- Taking into account relevant information from The Scout Association's records, police forces, relevant statutory authorities, personal references and other credible sources.

As part of the vetting arrangements, The Scout Association will undertake a **Personal Enquiry** which involves a check made against records at Headquarters for all adult volunteers and for certain roles a Criminal Record Disclosure Check. For foreign nationals or British Overseas Territory citizens operating abroad in British Scouting Overseas and Overseas Branches, checks must be made according to arrangements authorised by the Head of Safeguarding at Headquarters.

The Child Protection Policy

The Scout Association acknowledges the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people and is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with best practice and The Charity Commission requirements.

This policy:

- a) applies to all adults including the Board of Trustees, volunteers, paid staff, agency staff and anyone working on behalf of The Scout Association;
- b) recognises that the welfare and interests of children and young people are paramount in all circumstances; and
- c) aims to ensure that all children and young people have a positive and enjoyable experience of Scouting in a safe and child centred environment and are protected from abuse whilst participating in Scouting and otherwise.

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The Scout Association acknowledges that some children and young people, including those disabled and those from ethnic minority communities, can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and accepts the responsibility to take reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure their welfare.

The Scout Association will:

1. promote and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people;
2. ensure that everyone is clear about their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and is provided with appropriate mandatory learning opportunities to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children and young people;
3. provide all children and young people on joining the organisation with information for themselves and their parents or carers covering The Scout Association's safeguarding arrangements;
4. widely promote The Scout Association's safeguarding policies and procedures;
5. ensure that trustees, staff and volunteers take seriously all concerns and allegations of abuse and respond appropriately;
6. securely maintain and store confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns;
7. prevent the use of unsuitable individuals through the robust use of Disclosure and Barring arrangements as they apply in each nation within the UK, and the application of best practice in the safe recruitment of staff and volunteers working with children and young people;
8. ensure that robust safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in operation; and
9. address without delay any failure to comply with this policy.

Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually and revisions recommended to the Board of Trustees. This policy may also be reviewed in the following circumstances:

- changes in legislation or government guidance (including Working Together as revised within each nation, relevant legislative changes and nation specific child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures);
- in the light of learning identified by a Local Safeguarding Children Board;
- as required by the Charity Commission; and
- as a result of any other significant change or event.

Rule 2.4 Responsibilities within the Child Protection Policy

- a. All adults aged 18 or over within Scouting are responsible for the operation of the Association's Child Protection Policy.
- b. It is the responsibility of all adults to ensure that:
 - their behaviour is appropriate at all times;
 - they observe the rules established for the safety and security of young people;
 - they follow the procedures following suspicion, disclosure or allegation of child abuse;
 - they recognise the position of trust in which they have been placed;
 - in every respect, the relationships they form with the young people under their care are appropriate.
- c. The 'Young People First' (yellow card) sets out a Code of Behaviour, which is essential for all adults in Scouting to follow. Adults who fail to implement the Code of Behaviour or procedures issued by Headquarters may have the matter drawn to the attention of the relevant Commissioner who must take appropriate disciplinary action.
- d. Adults must not consume alcohol when they are directly responsible for young people on a Scouting activity and must not permit young people (aged under 18 years) to consume alcohol on

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Scouting activities. The Association issues further advice on Alcohol and Scouting, which is available from the Information Centre.

- e. The use of illegal substances on Scouting activities is unacceptable and appropriate action should be taken where necessary by responsible Commissioners. Headquarters issues additional guidance on request.
- f. Counties must designate one or more Safeguarding Awareness Co-ordinators, following consultation with Headquarters. Safeguarding Awareness Co-ordinators must undertake mandatory training as described in "POR: The Appointment Process". They shall have the responsibility of advising the County Commissioner and the County Executive Committee on the implementation of the Association's Child Protection and Anti Bullying Policies within the County. They shall also have a specific remit for monitoring compliance with these policies within the County and reporting their findings to the County Executive Committee and Headquarters.
- g. Safeguarding Awareness Co-ordinators shall provide general guidance to the various Districts and Groups in the counties to which they are appointed, but should not be involved in responding to allegations or suspicions of abuse.
- h. The role of Safeguarding Awareness Co-ordinator must not be combined with an appointment as a Group Scout Leader or Commissioner in the same County.
- i. The Head of Safeguarding at Headquarters is the Association's ultimate source of advice on all safeguarding matters, subject to any direction from the relevant sub Committee.
- j. The District Commissioner or the County Commissioner, as appropriate, must be satisfied that all those whom they appoint are: (a) appropriate persons to carry out the responsibilities of the appointment, and (b) if required, maintain a current valid disclosure.

They must ensure that all applicants demonstrate an understanding of and a commitment to the principles and procedures supporting the Association's Child Protection Policy.

- k. Group Scout Leaders must be satisfied that all those whom they invite to assist them in the work of the Scout Group are: (a) appropriate persons to carry out the tasks to be given to them, (b) are aware of their responsibilities under the Association's Child Protection Policy and (c) if required, maintain a current valid disclosure.
- l. In cases where there is an allegation or suspicion of child abuse the District Commissioner or County Commissioner, as appropriate, must immediately take steps to ensure that no Scouting situation arises which could cause further concern and that no adult or youth Member is placed in a position which could cause further compromise.

To this end, suspension of membership may be necessary (see Chapter 15).

- m. Headquarters may, from time to time, issue procedures detailing the reporting arrangements for suspicions or allegations of abuse. Group Scout Leaders and relevant Commissioners must follow these procedures.
- n. The Safeguarding Team at Headquarters has a remit to advise Commissioners of the actions required in the event of a suspicion or allegation of abuse. The Safeguarding Team has certain legal and regulatory obligations that all members of Scouting must assist in meeting as required. The Head of Safeguarding may issue mandatory advice regarding the management of such situations.
- o. Commissioners must consult the Safeguarding Team at Headquarters as soon as possible in the event of any incident, concern or allegation of abuse being made. In any event this must occur within 24 hours of the incident being reported.
- p. Headquarters may appoint a situation manager to be responsible for the Association's response to any allegation or suspicion of abuse. Situation managers appointed by Headquarters shall have full powers to act.
- q. Where urgent issues of safeguarding are involved the Chief Commissioner has the authority to suspend the membership of any adult or youth Member.

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- r. The suspending authority must ensure that the Vetting Team at Headquarters is informed immediately.
- s. When District or County Commissioners do not renew, or when they cancel appointments because the holder has not acted in accordance with the Association's Child Protection Policy, or has breached the code of behaviour, set out in the *Young People First* guidelines, they must inform the Vetting Team at Headquarters in writing of the reasons for the termination of the appointment.
- t. Nothing in the rules of the Association, or any guidance produced by it, may be construed as permitting an adult to take a young person away on an activity alone. No activity may take place where only one adult and one young person are present.

Anti-Bullying Policy

"Children have the right to protection from all forms of violence (physical or mental). They must be kept safe from harm and they must be given proper care by those looking after them." [*The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19*]

The Scout Association is committed to this ethos and seeks to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the prevention of all forms of bullying among Members. To this end all Scouting activities should have in place rigorous anti-bullying strategies.

Rule 2.5 Responsibility within the Anti-Bullying Policy

It is the responsibility of all adults in Scouting to help develop a caring and supportive atmosphere, where bullying in any form is unacceptable.

Adults in Scouting should:

- be aware of the potential problems bullying may cause;
- be alert to signs of bullying, harassment or discrimination;
- take action to deal with such behaviour when it occurs, following Association policy guidelines;
- provide access for young people to talk about any concerns they may have;
- encourage young people and adults to feel comfortable and caring enough to point out attitudes or behaviour they do not like;
- help ensure that their Group/Section has a published anti-bullying code.

Note: Support material in the form of a guide and poster is available from the Scout Information Centre

Development Policy

Subject to the Rules governing age ranges and mixed membership the Scout Movement is open to all young people of whatever background.

The Scout Association recognises, however, that access to Scouting is not equally available to all groups and communities across society as a whole.

The Operations sub-Committee of the Trustee Board and the Regional Services Team at Headquarters support the Movement in its work in making Scouting available to all.

In particular, through the use of innovation and experiment, it supports local Scouting in meeting the needs of young people in areas of urban disadvantage or priority, in highly rural areas, and among the minority ethnic communities.

It also works in collaboration with other agencies to support those disadvantaged young people who might benefit from its programme and ethos, and who may never become full Members of the Movement.

The Regional Services Team supports local Scouting in a number of different ways:

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- through the production and distribution of development material;
- through the sharing of experience and models of good practice;
- through support and advice from Headquarters staff, volunteer and professional;
- through recommendations to the National Development Grants Board for financial support.

Those seeking help in this field should contact the Regional Services Team at Headquarters in the first instance.

[Whilst Development Managers and Officers support the development of Scouting in England, the National Regional Services Manager works closely with Scottish Headquarters, the ScoutsCymru Office and the Northern Ireland Scout Council on development matters.]