Supporting Adults in Scouting - Mentoring

Scouting Ireland

Introduction

This short publication outlines the importance of ensuring all adult volunteers in Scouting are actively supported and the ways in which that support is delivered. It goes no to focus on the idea that every Programme Scouter should have a designated person to actively support them (a Mentor), and it sets out some guidelines for how Mentoring should best operate.

We trust you will find it a useful document and we encourage you to read it through and to familiarise yourself with its contents.

If you require specific advice or support in relation to the Mentoring, you should ask your County Commissioner, Provincial Adult Resources Representative, or Provincial Support Staff.

This document was derived from Section 420 of the Group Leader Handbook (originally published September 1st 2016), content was reformatted and updated slightly to reflect the current situation.

Contents

Support and Mentoring 3
The Adults in Scouting Approach 3
Induction 3
Training 3
Mutual Agreement & Review 3
On the job support 3
Supporting adults in Scouting 4
Welcoming them and helping them to feel at home with us 4
Helping them to attend Training 4
Supporting them in their Hands-On learning 4
Periodically helping them to review their effectiveness and to decide their future 4
Mentoring 4
An organisational perspective 4
Team working 4
Support from the Scout County team 5
Support from the Provincial team 5
Support from National teams 5
Supporting Roles 5
Induction 5
Mentoring 5
Approach to Mentoring 6
Mentoring Skills 7
Supporting Mentors 8

Support and Mentoring

Some years ago World Scouting (The World Organisation of the Scout Movement - WOSM) developed an approach for supporting and managing adults within the movement, called the **World Adults in Scouting Policy**. In February 2013, Scouting Ireland formally adopted this approach, and it became official policy.

The Adults in Scouting Approach

The Adults in Scouting approach calls for focussed and specific support for each adult in the movement throughout the various stages of their involvement. Indeed it envisages a cyclical approach for each specific role an adult may play during their time with us.

An outline of the Adults in Scouting approach is as follows:

Induction

Each adult in Scouting should be made aware of the requirements and responsibilities of the role they are about to undertake. Before they take on the role they should be given access to relevant information including, a proper explanation of the role and what is require do of them in it, who they will be working with, how the work is planned and reviewed, how decisions are made, what they should do if they need help, who will support them in their role and who will review with them how the role is working out for them and for the organisation.

Training

Each adult in Scouting should be provided with the training required to successfully fulfil the role they have undertaken in the organisation. Programme Scouters, and those directly supporting them, have a particular need for comprehensive training. Scouting Ireland's **Adult Training Standards** sets out the organisation's approach to training adult volunteers along with some specific requirements and expectations in this regard.

Mutual Agreement & Review

Each adult in Scouting should be given the opportunity periodically to review the role description as well as progress to date and outlook for the future. They should be invited to declare their (ongoing) commitment to the role as well as any specific supports they feel they need to get the job done. They should also be reminded about the training and other requirements for the role and encouraged and supported to complete the required training and to be compliant with any other requirements.

The person conducting the mutual agreement should be one who is in a position to ensure that the process works for the individual and for the organisation, who is familiar with the requirements of the adult's role and who is in a position to ensure that any agreed supports are made available.

Once Induction is complete and the adult understands the role, they should have their first **Mutual Agreement** for that role, and it should be revisited about once a year thereafter while they continue in that role.

On the job support

Each adult in Scouting should be given active support to enable them to be effective in their role(s). This should be delivered in a structured and focussed manner to ensure it does in fact happen and that it is effective.

Supporting adults in Scouting

The Adults in Scouting approach drives us to support adults in Scouting in the following specific ways:

Welcoming them and helping them to feel at home with us

Welcoming new adults in Scouting is facilitated through the Induction process. This process is set out in the publication **Welcoming Adults to Scouting - Induction**.

Helping them to attend Training

Training is delivered via eLearning modules, training courses and also specific agreed Hands-On learning experiences. The training scheme incorporates, induction training, The Wood Badge Trail and continuous learning. Adults in Scouting should be encouraged to attend and fully participate in the required training for the role they have undertaken. They should be given adequate information as to when and where training is available and the options available to them in pursuing their Wood Badge Trail. They should also be given appropriate practical supports to facilitate their attendance, for instance it is to be expected that course fees and travel expenses for training are refunded by Scout Groups or Scout Counties depending on the role. The Training opportunities for Programme Scouters are set out in the **Training Programme Scouters** publication.

Supporting them in their Hands-On learning

The Wood Badge Trail calls for participants to undertake some pre-course study or activity to prepare them for the learning on some of the training courses. It also calls for some specific tasks to be undertaken following some of the training courses to put the learning into practice whilst it is still fresh and to help consolidate the learning. Each adult in Scouting should be assigned a Mentor to help them with this.

Periodically helping them to review their effectiveness and to decide their future

The **Mutual Agreement and Review** process is a specific form of support and should be used to reflect on their effectiveness in the Programme Section/Group and to surface other tangible supports which may appropriate for each individual adult in Scouting.

Mentoring

To ensure this support activity is cohesive and effective it is suggested that each adult in Scouting should have assigned to them a Mentor, someone who will meet with them regularly and ensure that they are receiving practical support and encouragement as they require it. Each Scout Group and each Scout County should make arrangements to put this system in place for each of their adult members.

An organisational perspective

In addition the specific supports motivated directly by the Adults in Scouting approach, Scouting Ireland provides numerous other opportunities for supporting adults in their role(s).

Team working

In Scouting we promote the use of teams of adults to get the job done. This provides for a sharing of the workload as well as the possibility for joint problem solving, shared decision-making, stand-in arrangements when the adult is indisposed or temporarily unavailable, task rotation and succession planning. In each Scout Group the Group Scouter Team should act together to support the delivery of the youth programme within the Scout Group in a quality way to as many young people as possible.

Support from the Scout County team

The Scout County structure provides a means for neighbouring Scout Groups to share resources, expertise and activities. Where a common need exists across a number of Scout Groups this can be identified and addressed by targeted Scout County level initiatives. In addition, the Scout County team may comprise individuals with considerable Scouting experience who could provide direct support as appropriate.

Support from the Provincial team

The Provincial structure provides a means for neighbouring Scout Counties to share resources, expertise and activities. Where a common need exists across a number of Scout Counties this can be identified and addressed by targeted Provincial level initiatives. In addition, the Provincial team may comprise individuals with considerable Scouting experience who could provide direct support as appropriate. Members of the Provincial team have also got direct contacts at National level and so may be able to ensure that local issues are understood and reflected in national policy and any national initiatives.

Support from National teams

A number of teams exist at National level, each Department has a Core Team and there are also a number of Project Teams, these teams play a part in the running of the organisation, and some of these teams also organise activities or initiatives designed to impact local Scouting. These are notified to the membership via the organisation's website and regular email. Examples include youth programme activities, conferences and other events for adults, participation at certain international activities, competitions and join-in events.

Supporting Roles

Within the Scout Group there is a need for specific once-off support for each adult volunteer as they join us and become familiar with the role they are undertaking. There is also a need for specific support for each adult volunteer on an ongoing basis once they have become a member of a Section Programme team.

Induction

The Group Leader is responsible for overseeing the induction of Programme Scouters. Once an adult has indicated they are interested in becoming a Scouter the Group will utilise the Induction process to help them to get to grips with what is involved. The Group Leader may do this personally or may nominate a suitable person to do it. The person facilitating the Induction process for an adult volunteer is referred to as the **Guide**.

The Induction process has been designed to provide specific knowledge about the Scout Group, to support the adult with membership application and vetting requirements, to ensure the adult attends their Induction Training.

Once the Induction process is complete the adult is allocated to a particular Programme Section Team. Both the adult themselves and the Programme Section Team Lead should be involved in the decision as to which team they will work on.

The Induction process is set out in more detail in the **Welcoming Adults to Scouting - Induction** publication.

Mentoring

Once an adult has started working on a Programme Section Team, they should be assigned a Mentor. The Mentor for Programme Section Team members will normally be the Programme Section Team Lead, the Mentor for Programme Team Leads will normally be the Group Lead or a Deputy Group Leader. The Programme Section Team Lead may nominate some other suitable person to mentor the adult, for instance if there is a trainer on the Programme Section Team, that person may well be a suitable Mentor. The Programme Section Team Lead should

discuss the selection of Mentors with the Group Leader or with someone designated by the Group Leader such as a Deputy Group Leader, Group Trainer or another experienced Scouter delegated to support the Mentoring process in the Scout Group.

The Mentor will support the adult by:

- Providing them with support with their training
  - to help them understand the training required and the options that exist
  - to help them to select the most appropriate sequence in which to undertake training courses based on their own needs and the needs of their Programme Section / Group team
  - to help them to select appropriate **Learning for the Team** based on the needs of their Programme Section / Group team as well as their own needs
  - to help them to make effective use of any Hands-On assignments they may undertake following training courses
  - to help them to apply the learning in the course of their work in the Scout Group
- Helping them to access other help and information they may need
  - Scouting Ireland structures (Group, County, Province, National)
  - Scouting Ireland Policies (including those relating to Youth Programme and Adults in Scouting)
  - Useful resources (Scouting and non-Scouting sources)
- Helping them to play an effective role on the team by
  - Clarifying expectations and needs as well as reviewing progress and outcomes, **Mutual Agreement & Review**
  - Ensuring individual needs and expectations are matched to team needs and plans

Approach to Mentoring

The manner in which support is delivered by the Mentor is crucial to creating a truly supportive environment for our adult volunteers.

In general, the Mentor should:

- Respect the individuals privacy and should not discuss the process with anyone who does not have a need to know
- Be open and honest with the adult(s) they are mentoring, not overbearing or dismissive
- Respect the adults personal views, avoid being judgemental
- Encourage the adult to take responsibility for their own contribution and its effect

Some guidelines which the Mentor may find useful:

1. Create an open and supportive climate for discussion

   Seek to develop trust by encouraging open, two-way communications; this often means sharing personal experiences or difficult times you went through so that the person you are Mentoring knows they can discuss tough issues.

   - Respect the person's individuality, they may or may not have a similar style to you
   - Be patient if they seem unfocused, help them focus by presenting and discussing options
   - Make it clear that you hope to learn from this experience too

2. Demonstrate good listening/follow-up skills

   Most of us need to improve our listening skills; we tend to talk more than we listen and to interrupt people more than we should

   - Ask open-ended questions to get them to open up as much as possible (Examples: How did you decide to….? What do you think the problem is….?)
   - After you have listened fully to a response, ask good follow-up questions to demonstrate genuine interest. (Example: When this camp is over, what do you hope to do next?)
   - If you do not understand something, try to paraphrase it to be sure you understand what the person is trying to say. (Example: So what I think you're saying is that…)
   - After you've discussed an issue in one conversation, be sure to ask how the situation has progressed next time you write an e-mail or talk
   - Don't assume that what worked for you will work for them; rather, try saying something like, 'My experience was…. what do you think will work for you?'

3. Provide constructive feedback and advice

   It is important for you to match the degree of openness of the person you are Mentoring. Do not give negative feedback until you have built a strong relationship and the adult being mentored is ready to receive it.

   - Give a balance of both praise and constructive feedback on how to improve
   - Always focus on behaviours that can be changed (not personality traits!) and behaviours that are appropriate within the Programme Section and the Scout Group
   - Let them work the problem and then give feedback and suggestions
   - Help them make specific and realistic plans; be aware of how they are progressing, help them adapt plans when necessary, and provide ongoing encouragement
   - Do problem solving with them when issues/barriers arise, do not feel that you have to have all the answers but rather help them think through strategies and options
   - Consider and discuss additional ways for them to get advice and information they may need; call on other mentors/colleagues when appropriate and try to help the person you are Mentoring widen their network

Mentoring Skills

The Mentor will need good interpersonal skills to do the job well, to be successful they will be approachable, enthusiastic & committed to doing a good job.

A successful Mentor:

- Shows willingness to share skills, knowledge & expertise
- Demonstrates a positive attitude, acts as a positive role model
- Takes a personal interest in the mentoring relationship
- Exhibits enthusiasm in the work we do as Scouters
- Values ongoing learning & growth in adult volunteers
- Provides guidance & constructive feedback
- Is respected by colleagues in the Scout Group

- Sets & meets ongoing personal goals as well as goals related to their role as a Scouter
- Values the opinions & initiatives of others
- Motivates others by setting a good example

Supporting Mentors

It should not be assumed that once established the Mentoring approach will operate smoothly without some periodic oversight and/or support.

Things which should help:

- Group Leader checks in with each Mentor periodically, at least once a year and more frequently at first
- All Mentors meet periodically, to share what's going well and what could be improved, to share ideas, to learn from the experiences and to share good practice
- Mentors share ideas and experiences across Groups in the County
- Group Leader shares experiences with County Commissioner and/or other Group Leaders in the County
- Mentors may undertake specific training for that task