

## Links with other childcare and youth organisations

Girlguiding UK is a recognised part of the UK's youth service provision and is affiliated to or linked with other organisations within the childcare and youth sectors (see page 63).

### The Trefoil Guild

The Trefoil Guild (see also page 63) is part of Girlguiding UK but has a separate constitution and is independently administered.

The aim and objectives of The Trefoil Guild are:

- to give practical, financial and moral support to Guiding and Scouting
- to keep alive among members the spirit of the Guide and Scout Promises and Laws
- to carry that spirit into the communities in which members live and work.

## Chapter 2: Structure

### Unit guiding

Young members are grouped by age into four sections: Rainbow Guides, Brownie Guides, Guides and the Senior Section. The term 'Guides' is sometimes used to refer to all sections. Girls and young women become members from attending their second meeting.

Section	Minimum joining age	Normal age for transfer to the next section*	Recommended time for a girl to spend in the section
Rainbow Guide	Fifth birthday (fourth birthday in Northern Ireland only).	Between her seventh birthday and seven years six months.	Two years (three years in Northern Ireland only).
Brownie Guide	Seventh birthday.	Between her 10th and 11th birthdays.	Three years.
Guide	10th birthday.	Between her 14th and 16th birthdays.	Four years.
Senior Section (including Rangers, Young Leaders and any other groups of members aged between 14 and 26)	14th birthday.	26th birthday**.	

\*The age of transfer is flexible. A girl moves on to the next section when she:

- has reached the minimum age for entry into the new section
- has found out about the new section and the unit to which she is moving
- feels ready and happy to make the transfer.

\*\* A young woman can be a member of the Senior Section until her 26th birthday.

## The unit

'Unit' is the name given to a group of Rainbow Guides, Brownie Guides, Guides or Senior Section members and their respective Leaders.

Each unit is registered with Girlguiding UK and receives a registration certificate in the name of the unit.

Most units are open to any girl who wishes to join. Some are sponsored by a certain body such as a religious community, hospital or school, but have no restrictions on membership. A very few 'closed sponsored units' restrict membership to a certain group, for example units in residential schools (see also page 53).

Girlguiding UK endeavours to ensure that there are enough open units in an area to enable all girls to become members, regardless of their faith or of the school they attend. In places where there can only be one unit, it should be open to all girls and young women, willing to make the Promise, who wish to join it.

In addition, guiding can sometimes be offered via the Lone Guiding Scheme (see page 54), Joint Units or Joint Groups (see page 52).

The adults working with a unit are called the Leadership Team. This team normally includes the Unit Leader and Assistant Leader(s). There may also be Young Leaders, Unit Helpers and occasional helpers, for example parents or Trefoil Guild members. See also 'Roles in guiding', page 38, and 'Flexible guiding', page 50.

## Flexible guiding

'Flexible guiding' (see also page 50) describes ways in which Leaders can adapt guiding to suit local circumstances. Being flexible ensures that girls and young women can have guiding opportunities in areas where a 'one size fits all' approach would mean that guiding could not exist.

## Adult to child ratios

Girlguiding UK suggests adult to child ratios (see page 22) for normal unit meetings within the usual meeting place. Unit Leadership Teams are not obliged to follow them, apart from the mandatory requirement for two adults at all Rainbow unit meetings. The Leadership Team's decision regarding the number of girls and young women in the unit is final.

The ratios become mandatory when:

- taking the unit members out of the normal meeting place
- undertaking certain activities. (For more information, see the 'A-Z of activities' on Girlguiding UK's website [www.girlguiding.org.uk](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk).)

A unit meeting may be held without a qualified Leader being present at the discretion of the Commissioner, provided that in all other respects the requirements for holding meetings are satisfied and that it is only on a one-off or temporary basis.

Only in exceptional circumstances should there only be one adult running the unit (except Rainbow units where there must always be two adults). If necessary a rota of parents and other volunteers should be formed to provide extra support for the Leaders and to ensure that there is a minimum of two adults at each unit meeting. Volunteers on a rota do not need to complete criminal record Disclosure or reference checks, but any volunteers who have not done so must not be left unsupervised with girls and young women.

## Supporting adults in guiding

As Girlguiding UK is such a large organisation, it is divided into smaller areas for easier administration and communication.

These areas are called:

- Districts
- Divisions
- Counties
- Countries and Regions, including British Guides in Foreign Countries (BGIFC).

This structure is often adapted to suit local needs, for example in Branch Associations, in BGIFC or in areas with few members where no Districts or Divisions exist.

### The District Team

Units may be grouped into Districts led by a District Team. District Teams are encouraged to work together to meet the needs of local guiding. Most District Teams are led by a District Commissioner. Titles and administrative areas may vary; some Counties do not have Districts and not every District has a District Commissioner. (See also 'Girlguiding UK teams and committees', page 50.)

### The Division Team

Districts may be grouped into Divisions led by a Division Team. Division Teams are encouraged to work together to meet the needs of guiding within a given area and provide strategic support to the County Commissioner. Most Division Teams are led by a Division Commissioner. Titles and administrative areas may vary; some Counties do not have Divisions and not every Division is led by a Division Commissioner. (See also 'Girlguiding UK teams and committees', page 49.)

### The County Team

Divisions (or Districts where there are no Divisions) are grouped into Counties led by a County Team. Guiding Counties do not necessarily correspond to local government boundaries, but are created to meet the strategic needs of guiding in a given area loosely linked to geographic boundaries. County Teams are led by a County Commissioner. (See also 'Girlguiding UK teams and committees', page 49.)

Most Counties have an Executive Committee, with its own constitution or terms of reference, to support the County Commissioner and administer guiding in that County. Counties may have a Junior Council, Forum or Panel, which should have its own constitution or terms of reference.

In some Counties the County Team may be supported by professional staff.

## Countries and Regions

Counties are supported in Regions or Countries according to their geographic location. (See also 'Girlguiding UK teams and committees', page 48.)

The Regions are:

- Girlguiding Anglia
- Girlguiding London and South East England (LaSER)
- Girlguiding Midlands
- Girlguiding North East England
- Girlguiding North West England
- Girlguiding South West England

The Countries are:

- Girlguiding Cymru (Wales)
- Girlguiding Scotland
- Girlguiding Ulster (Northern Ireland)

All Countries and Regions have equal status and responsibilities and unless otherwise stated the term 'Country or Region' applies equally to BGIFC.

Each of the Countries and Regions has a Chief Commissioner; BGIFC also has a Commissioner. (See 'Roles in guiding', page 40.)

Each Country and Region has an Executive Committee that is appointed according to the Country or Region constitution. Country and Region Executive Committees are responsible to the Executive Committee of Girlguiding UK for the administration of guiding in their area. (See also 'Girlguiding UK teams and committees', page 46 .)

The Country or Region Chief Commissioner:

- chairs the Country or Region Executive Committee
- represents her Country or Region on the Executive Committee of Girlguiding UK
- is a trustee of Girlguiding UK.

Each of the Countries and Regions has an administrative office which is supported by a small team of professional staff.

## UK core volunteer roles

Girlguiding UK has a number of volunteer roles that provide core support and contribute to the decision-making process and development of the Association. These roles may include the:

- Patron(s)
- President
- Vice President(s)

- Chief Guide
- Deputy Chief Guide
- Treasurer
- Chairman of the Trefoil Guild
- Chairmen of Committees
- Advisers/Coordinators.

## Administration

The main office for the administration of Girlguiding UK in the United Kingdom is called Commonwealth Headquarters (CHQ) and is situated in London (see page 77 for contact details). The professional staff and volunteers at CHQ support the Countries and Regions, the Counties, Divisions, Districts and units, and administer Girlguiding UK on their behalf.

## Decision making within Girlguiding UK

Girlguiding UK is a girl-led organisation and strongly encourages its young members to make their own decisions about what they do in guiding. Structures for decision making within units are appropriate to the age range of the unit members.

- Rainbow Guides and Brownie Guides discuss ideas with their Leaders as a whole unit, through the Rainbow Chat or Brownie Pow-wow.
- Guides have an opportunity to discuss ideas and suggestions among themselves during Patrol time; these ideas and thoughts can then be taken to the Patrol Leaders' Council for discussion with other Patrol Leaders and the Unit Leaders.
- Senior Section units may have a Look Wider Team or other team for communicating ideas and suggestions among the unit members and the Unit Leaders.

### Strategic decision making

Together, the Council, the Executive Committee, the Forum for Young Women and representation from the Trefoil Guild form the strategic level of Girlguiding UK's committee structure.

Feeding in to these groups are other groups representing the interests of all members of Girlguiding UK, the Association's commercial interests and its staff.

### The Council

As outlined in the Royal Charter and Bye-laws, Girlguiding UK is governed by the Council (see also 'Girlguiding UK teams and committees', page 46). The Council:

- is responsible for upholding the aims of the Association
- maintains an overview of the Association in relation to contemporary society, taking a considered view of broad issues outside the Association
- concerns itself with the future development of Girlguiding UK in the light of these issues.

Girlguiding UK's Royal Charter and Bye-laws can be read on our website

**[www.girlguiding.org.uk](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk)**.

### The Executive Committee of the Council

The Royal Charter and Bye-laws vest the management of the business of the Association in the Executive Committee of the Council (see also 'Girlguiding UK teams and committees',

page 47). The Executive Committee is primarily responsible for matters of policy, finance, forward planning, direction setting and coordination of various Girlguiding UK events.

There are three categories of members:

- ex-officio voting members
- elected voting members
- non-voting members.

The voting members of the Executive Committee are the charity trustees of Girlguiding UK.

A member who is under the age of 18 cannot be a trustee and is not entitled to vote.

### **Forum for Young Women (INNOVATE)**

The Association's Forum for Young Women (known as Innovate) is a channel to promote the views of young women at all levels within Girlguiding UK. It is also used as a sounding board by both the Council and the Executive Committee. Innovate is open to all members between their 16th and 26th birthdays, and enables them to participate in Association developments and decision making.

## Chapter 3: Policies

### 3.1 Membership and Recruitment Policy

Girlguiding UK's policies and related statements provide a structure in which guiding can take place safely, consistently and in accordance with legislation. Policies **must** be followed by Girlguiding UK's members and by recognised volunteers involved in delivering or supporting guiding. These policy statements are supported by further information and resources to ensure that our members put the policies into practice.

#### Policy statement

*Girlguiding UK is a single-sex organisation in accordance with the provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act 1986. Girlguiding UK believes that the needs of girls and young women are best met through an organisation catering specifically for girls and led by women.*

#### Young members

Enabling young members to develop in an all-female environment makes a positive contribution to their self-confidence and self-esteem. The all-female environment means that girls and women have to take responsibility for making things happen. Leadership skills and self-reliance can be developed without the added pressures of a mixed-gender setting.

Research shows that young members appreciate the opportunity afforded by Girlguiding UK to 'be themselves' without the pressures of belonging to mixed groups.

Youth membership of Girlguiding UK is voluntary and is open to any girl or young woman aged between her 5th (4th in Northern Ireland) and 26th birthdays, regardless of faith, race,