



# Working with Advisers and Coordinators

– a Commissioner's guide



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

**Girlguiding**

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# Introduction

One of the key roles of a Commissioner is to work alongside a team of Advisers and/or Coordinators, some of whom you will appoint. By building up a good team that fits the needs of your area, you can work together to promote the aims and objectives of Girlguiding and ensure the smooth and effective running of the area.

It is vital to choose the right volunteer for any new role and to help them to do the role to the best of their abilities. This resource provides some practical guidance on how you can determine the role you wish your Adviser/Coordinator to fulfil and how to find and support the right person for the role.

# Recruiting an Adviser/Coordinator

## What are your needs?

As a Commissioner, you must decide whether you need an Adviser or a Coordinator for a particular area of responsibility.

An **Adviser** is a specialist in her own field who can offer support and practical advice, for example, a Boating and Water Activities Adviser. The primary role of an Adviser is to 'advise' their Commissioner, be part of an effective team and to use clear channels of communication.

A **Coordinator** is usually a designated point of contact for a particular element of the guiding programme, for qualifications or for a particular event, such as a Leadership Qualification Coordinator. They are appointed by the relevant Commissioner based on local needs and may not necessarily be a specialist. For example, a Leadership Coordinator would coordinate all the activities required to ensure that new Leaders are trained effectively and that relevant paperwork is completed.

You may not need an Adviser or Coordinator for every specialist or geographical area. The needs of your County/Division will determine the roles you will require to ensure the smooth running of the programme or to fulfil your business plan. For example, do you need a Boating and Water Adviser if there is no area of water in your County? In this instance it is probably more appropriate if your Outdoor Adviser builds up contacts in surrounding Counties, or you consider a job share with a neighbouring County Commissioner.

Commissioners have the flexibility to appoint an Adviser, Coordinator, both or neither, for any area. For example, a Commissioner could have a County Camp Adviser who supports, trains and advises in the traditional sense, and also a County Coordinator who pulls together information about all outdoor events within the County.

Advisers and Coordinators are 18 years or older, can be male or female (in this document for 'she' read 'he/she'), and do not need to be a member of Girlguiding. All Advisers and Coordinators are appointed for a defined term or appointment. See *The Guiding Manual* at [www.girlguiding.org.uk](http://www.girlguiding.org.uk) for further details.

## Creating a role description

Once you have determined the role you need to fill, the next step is to create a role description (remit for the position) or amend the one that currently exists. It is recommended that this is completed in conjunction with the new Adviser/Coordinator.

If someone is coming to the end of their term, it is useful to review their experience in a particular role. Ask them if they feel there is still a need for their role or if anything has changed over the time of their appointment. This feedback will help determine whether you need to find a replacement or explore a new way of working. Try to be aware of when an Adviser/Coordinator's appointment is coming to an end so that, where possible, there can be an overlap or handover.

## What is a role description?

A role description is an essential planning tool – it outlines what is expected of the person in that role, and what type of person they will need to be, so that you can ensure that the role meets the needs of your local area.

## How to write a role description

You may have certain expectations about a new role, as may your prospective Adviser/Coordinator. Before discussing it with her, take time to make some notes about what you expect the role to entail and get the prospective Adviser/Coordinator to do the same. This highlights any differences in opinion and could help to develop the role in other ways.

## Role description checklist

This list may help you decide what to include in a role description.

- Title of the role.
- Length of appointment.
- Fundamental purpose of the role, ie the key reason the role exists, the role that you expect the Adviser/Coordinator to play and the parameters within which they will work.
- Key responsibilities eg sitting on committees, information gathering, training sessions, attending meetings, report writing, unit/event visits, liaising with other organisations, managing forms, record keeping etc.
- Individual requirements – qualifications, personal qualities, skills.
- Reporting relationships.
- Responsible for – people (who?), money (how much? does this include fundraising?), equipment/resources (what is there? where is it held?).
- Working conditions – services available to help her, such as use of a photocopying machine or support from a secretary.
- Finance – is there a budget for the role? What needs to be budgeted for (eg postage, stationery, meetings, travel etc)? What expenses can be claimed? Who pays Girlguiding membership fees? Who pays membership to recognised organisations?
- Learning and development opportunities within the role and, if necessary, who pays for any training costs.
- Outcomes – what would you like to see achieved in the role?

Bear in mind that the area (geographic as well as specialist) in which an Adviser/Coordinator works will affect her responsibilities. It's important to define the specific needs for an area rather than cutting and pasting from existing role descriptions.

It will also help to agree a work plan for the term of the Adviser/Coordinator (see Appendix A).

## Tips for writing role descriptions

The following are general attributes that you could include in a role description, but you should also consider any qualities or responsibilities specific to a certain role.

An Adviser/Coordinator will be or do the following.

- Promote guiding generally; presenting a positive image of guiding to internal and external audiences.
- Take a lead and promote her own area or specialism (particularly relevant for Advisers).
- Identify, analyse and disseminate good practice and collaborate with others.
- Be aware of external trends.

- Be aware of health and safety considerations in relation to the programme.
- Have knowledge of the role to which she is to be appointed, or be willing to learn/train if necessary.
- Know where to gain information and seek advice and know how to do it effectively.
- Have a flexible approach – they will be a member of your team, so will be expected to work in harmony with others.
- Be willing to delegate – sometimes an Adviser/Coordinator will need to delegate some of their tasks, especially when organising large-scale events.
- Not necessarily be a Leader or have been in guiding for a long time. When looking for Advisers you can ‘look outside of the box’, for example some Counties have male Advisers. You could also consider volunteers taking part in the 12 Hour Challenge or Trefoil Guild members.
- Be enthusiastic! Sometimes it might be better not to have an Adviser/Coordinator rather than someone doing a bad job and giving a negative impression of guiding.

When writing a role description, remember to do the following.

- Be as concise as possible.
- Start each responsibility with a verb, for example, ‘Coordinate the County Team’ or ‘Attend Region Executive Committee meetings and report back to team members.’
- Make clear those tasks which the Adviser/Coordinator should carry out and those which she is responsible for ensuring that others carry out.
- Don’t include too many tasks – a maximum of 7-8 tasks or areas of responsibility is sufficient otherwise the role may seem too daunting.

Here is a list of key phrases you could use when writing a role description.

- Develop knowledge of ...
- Understand and be familiar with ...
- Provide leadership and guidance to ...
- Supervise ...
- Set objectives for ...
- Prepare ...
- Arrange ...
- Plan and carry out ...
- In conjunction with ...
- Liaise ...
- Set and enforce ...
- Produce ...
- Participate in ...
- Inform ...
- Submit accurate reports ...
- Maintain accurate records ...

# How to find a potential Adviser/Coordinator

## Individual membership development/promote people

- Consult any relevant people eg your team of Commissioners and Advisers/Coordinators for suggestions of who might be suitable to fill a particular role.
- Seek feedback from the current Adviser or Coordinator to see if the role has changed and to ask if she has any suggestions for her successor.
- A member may volunteer herself to take on the role on if she is aware that an Adviser or Coordinator is nearing the end of her term of office.
- Issue an open invitation to Leaders to discuss their aspirations to be an Adviser/Coordinator. You can then draw up a list of potential volunteers and their skills, for use now or in the future.
- An Adviser/Coordinator role may be the perfect 'springboard' for a volunteer who has recently completed the 12 Hour Challenge and would like to remain involved.

## Talent spot

- Keep your eyes and ears to the ground at any event or training session you attend. Division and unit events are often an excellent opportunity to discover an individual doing a fantastic job 'in action'.
- Look out for someone who has good knowledge of a subject, is enthusiastic and would enjoy working as part of a team.
- Visit Senior Section events to promote the role of Adviser/Coordinator. For members aged 18-25 the role may be an ideal solution – allowing them to continue to volunteer whilst fitting in work or study commitments.

## Advertise

- Promote the role via your County/Division website and newsletter, if you have one.
- If you're recruiting for a specialism such as boating or climbing, contact local clubs to advertise the role, as Advisers can be male or female and need not be members.
- Advertise the role using the attributes and qualities you require rather than the title of the role. The title 'Adviser' could deter people who have different expectations of the role based on the current holder of the role or historical perceptions. This is an example of an advert for a Camp Adviser.

*Do you take girls to camp regularly? Do your girls have a fantastic time and learn new skills? Could you pass on your experience and enthusiasm to other Leaders who would like to take girls away for the first time?*

## Being flexible

There are no hard and fast rules on which Adviser or Coordinator roles you will need to appoint or who you should appoint to fill them. Don't forget that roles can be role-shared between people and geographical boundaries.

A Commissioner should be flexible if a potential Adviser/Coordinator says she can do the role but would like someone to help her. See if she has anyone in mind to role share with



and if you can agree a split of responsibility. This could be one occasion where an Adviser and Coordinator are appointed to work together. An example of this could be a situation where a Young Leader Adviser would have specialist knowledge about the Young Leader's Qualification and ensure that Leaders were supported to develop Young Leaders, and a Young Leader Coordinator would support the Young Leaders to move through their qualification and ensure that all relevant paperwork is completed.

Division/County/Country or Region boundaries should not be a barrier. If a County has a good International Adviser with lots of experience and a neighbouring County does not have anyone with international experience, then you could consider asking the County International Adviser if she could cover both Counties. You could even appoint an assistant to work with the Adviser or an enthusiastic Leader who wants to gain experience – an Adviser of the future!

# Supporting an Adviser/Coordinator

## Giving your Adviser/Coordinator a good start!

Make sure your new Adviser/Coordinator feels welcome. Introduce her to the rest of your team, invite her to team meetings (as appropriate) and any social functions that you hold.

### Handover period

Ideally the existing Adviser/Coordinator should hand over the role to the new Adviser/Coordinator over a period of a few weeks. If this is not possible, try to get even a basic handover from the departing Adviser/Coordinator and try and be available to answer any questions the new Adviser/Coordinator might have during her first few weeks.

### Structure

It is important to ensure that the Adviser/Coordinator is aware of Girlguiding's structure, the local structure and the channels of communication. These can be found in *The Guiding Manual*.

### Resources

Think about what resources the Adviser/Coordinator will need in their role. Some important ones are:

- *The Adviser/Coordinator Toolkit*
- *The Guiding Manual* and *The Guiding Handbook* (available on the members' area of the website)
- common forms (available on the members' area of the website)
- *Internal Funding at Girlguiding* (available on the members' area of the website)
- resources relevant to the Adviser/Coordinator's specialism including relevant copies of Girlguiding qualification workbooks
- directories (County, Country/Region and/or Girlguiding)
- a map of the area they will be working in
- Girlguiding's *Annual Review*
- a copy of the last meeting's minutes or notes
- a five-year plan (County/Country, Region)
- the Insurance Essentials card
- a budget/expenses claim form (and the process for claiming expenses)
- current Division/County/Region newsletter (as appropriate)
- a list of meetings/telephone conferences and timings – when they need to attend and how often they need to run/attend them.

If there are any essential resources that the Adviser/Coordinator must have to be able to fulfil their role, consider how these will be paid for – does your area give a grant to Advisers/Coordinators or should they purchase the resources and claim them back through expenses?

### Equipment and access

Ensure that the new Adviser/Coordinator knows what equipment is available to her in her

area and how to gain access to it – including local procedures. You should also think about whether or not she requires use of the internet.

## Reviewing the role

It is recommended that you regularly review how things are going with your Adviser/Coordinator. This doesn't have to be a formal review, just an informal chat in which you can ascertain if she needs any support or has any training needs. Having a role description makes it easier if you ever need to pinpoint any areas where your Adviser/Coordinator isn't meeting the needs of your local area. You can use it to discuss and address the gaps in her performance.

If an Adviser/Coordinator seems to be struggling in the role, you need to deal with it as soon as possible. As mentioned before, it's sometimes better not to have an Adviser/Coordinator, rather than one who is struggling, not enjoying it or feels she has to stay as there isn't anyone else to fill the role. You could discuss this during an informal chat by identifying any training needs she may have or other help she may need, for example, if her personal circumstances have changed and she needs to step down for a while.

## Saying thank you

It's extremely important to give your Adviser or Coordinator thanks and recognition. Here are some ideas.

- If an Adviser/Coordinator organises an event well, praise her and those involved on their success. You should write a thank you card too, which is always a nice token of appreciation to receive.
- At times you may wish to nominate an individual for a Girlguiding Award (or Country/Region or County award if they exist). There are guidelines for these awards, so seek advice from your own Commissioner.
- It is helpful to be aware of what is happening in your Adviser/Coordinator's life and respond sensitively as and when is appropriate.
- Periodically, make sure she knows that you value her work and thank her for supporting you.

# Appendices

## Appendix A

### Suggested outline for a role description

Role	
Personal qualities	
Be able to	
Term of office	
Appointed by	
Responsible to	
Communicating with	
Expenses – what can be claimed and how to claim	
Time commitment eg meetings	

### Suggested outline for a work plan

	Aims	How those aims will be fulfilled	How aims links to overall strategic plan
Year 1			
Year 2			
Year 3			

### Example of a completed role description

*Please note: This is intended to give you an idea of what a role description looks like, but role descriptions will vary depending on the needs of your area.*

Role	County Public Relations Adviser
Personal qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● be a natural communicator both in writing and face-to-face situations</li> <li>● have administrative and leadership experience</li> <li>● know Girlguiding well, or be able to learn very quickly.</li> </ul>
Be able to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● encourage Leaders to use the visual aids available from Girlguiding and those held by Country/Region</li> <li>● act as a source of general help and advice on public relations matters within the County</li> <li>● support Division PR Advisers</li> <li>● assess press coverage through press cuttings in the County and work actively to encourage local print and broadcast media coverage which reflects Girlguiding’s key messages</li> <li>● lead a team</li> <li>● publicise and help with County events</li> <li>● support and assist recruitment campaigns</li> <li>● provide material for the County bulletin and/or website</li> <li>● support the County Commissioner with the production of the County Annual Review</li> <li>● submit and manage own budget</li> <li>● promote guiding at County level to key external stakeholders</li> <li>● ensure that national and Country/Region public relations programmes are implemented throughout the County.</li> </ul>
Term of office	Three years with possibility of two year extension.
Appointed by	County Commissioner.
Responsible to	County Executive through the Assistant County Commissioner.

Communicating with	Assistant County Commissioner.
Expenses – what can be claimed and how to claim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● prepare and manage own budget, claiming expenses from the County Treasurer at least once a term as appropriate</li> <li>● budgets (and accounts if applicable) must be submitted to the Finance Committee by the required deadline.</li> </ul>
Time commitment, eg meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Two County Adviser meetings per year (or equivalent meetings where appropriate)</li> <li>● team meetings as appropriate</li> <li>● coordinate events as requested by the Executive Committee</li> <li>● attend the County Annual Review or equivalent</li> <li>● coordinate any activities relating to area</li> <li>● submit Annual Report to the County Commissioner</li> <li>● attend Country and Region Adviser/Coordinator Meetings and/or teleconferences.</li> </ul>



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