

Mapping exercise toolkit



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

Girlguiding

Introduction

Understanding your local area, its growth and its development are key ways to understanding the membership needs of Girlguiding and growing guiding in your area. Mapping is a way of highlighting the unique features of an area so that you can focus on problems and solutions based on human demographics and geography. Different factors can affect guiding in your local area. Below are a few things to think about.

- Are there any new housing developments, or ones planned in the future?
- What public transport is available and are there plans for this to change?
- Are there any new schools, colleges or community provisions (such as youth clubs or activities), or areas with increasing populations?

A mapping exercise is a simple and effective way of analysing your area and discovering potential for development. This toolkit will give you an overview of how mapping can help you to grow and develop guiding so that everyone has the opportunity to become involved. You may find it to be an especially useful exercise at a District/Division meeting.

If something works in your area that isn't included here, carry on doing it! We are always on the lookout for different ways to deliver guiding, so why not share your good practice with the Growing Guiding team. Email us at growingguiding@girlguiding.org.uk. You never know who might be inspired in the future!

Using Census information and Go!

Census information can also complement mapping by looking for trends in membership numbers. If you can see a trend developing over several years, you may want to look into it further and see if there are problems that can be addressed. For example, if an area has a decreasing number of girls and units have closed three years in a row, you may want to highlight this problem and see what conclusions you can draw about why guiding is declining in the area, then take action.

Trends, 'blips' and patterns in guiding numbers can be monitored using several years' worth of Census information. This can work with your map to show why certain problems have arisen. For example, an area may not have a sufficient number of girls of a relevant age, and once transitions are made from one section to another, there are too few girls to replace them. In identifying shortfalls early, you may be able to stop units closing in an area and focus on growth rather than problems.

You can also use data from your area stored on Go! and compare it to previous years' Census information to get an overview of any trends or patterns developing. Your County Go! user will be able to run reports on the information that you need to do this.

For further details on how to use Census information, see *How you can use Census information – and why you should!* resource at www.girlguiding.org.uk > Members' area > Growing guiding > Retention > Using Census information.

Never underestimate local knowledge. Using this with Census information and a mapping exercise provides you with a valuable tool for understanding your area and helping local guiding to reach its potential.

The mapping exercise

It's up to you as to what size area you decide to work with in a mapping exercise and this will differ depending on your location and role. You may find it helpful to have a map of a larger-scale area (such as your County), to establish the distribution of units and to gain an overview. You can then use District or Division maps to plot amenities and other factors specific to your area. If you do not have access to a photocopier, approach your employer or a local business to donate services such as copying and enlarging maps.

What you will need

- a map of the area
- map pins or stickers of different colours
- the location of current units, other facilities and waiting-to-join lists
- Census figures (preferably from the last two to three years so that you can make comparisons and investigate developing trends)
- paper and pens
- local knowledge!

For your first mapping exercise, aim to establish the location and spread of units in your area, where there are waiting-to-join lists and units with space for more girls. (You will need to speak with your Unit Leaders to determine where there is space for more girls.) Ask your County Go! user to run the reports that will show this information and plot the information on your map.

Identify areas without units and think about possible improvements. This will be a useful starting point for future mapping in your area.

What does your area look like?

The UK is hugely varied geographically. There are heavily populated towns and cities as well as sparsely populated rural villages. Understanding how the geography of an area contributes to involvement in guiding is essential.

Social isolation can exist in remote villages due to lack of facilities that enable inclusion (such as frequent public transportation) as well as highly industrialised areas which have not integrated.

One of the easiest ways to establish what your area looks like is to work from a task sheet (see example on the next page). This can be amended to cover the specific factors relevant to you and your area.

Mapping is like carrying out a health-check of an area – you are looking for places that might need a bit of a boost and the reasons why they're not as healthy as they could be.

It is also a good idea to bring along a range of resources that could help with the recruitment of girls and adults. Information about flexible guiding or the *12-Hour Challenge* could also provide ideas of how you can overcome barriers to participation. All resources are available free from Girlguiding shops, excluding postage and packaging, or downloadable from www.girlguiding.org.uk > Members' area > Growing guiding.

The mapping task sheet

- Where are the units?
- Where is there housing? Are there new housing developments planned?
- Where are the schools, colleges or universities?
- Where are the community centres?
- Is there easily accessible public transport?
- Which units have too many Leaders, and which do not have enough?
- Where are more units needed?
- Where are there too many units?
- Where are the girls waiting to join? What factors are involved?

Mark the location of each of these features on your map. Some answers – such as meeting places – will provide specific addresses. Others – such as transport routes, bus stops and housing developments – will run along streets. Still other answers – such as where more units are needed – may be whole sections of the map.

This part of the exercise will explain how plotting local information can help you to start thinking about the needs of your area and how these affect membership levels and waiting-to-join lists. For an example of a map marked with local amenities, commercial and residential developments and features [click here](#).

Location of units

To plot the units on the map, use the pins or stickers. Use a different colour for each section so that you can differentiate between them easily. This will help you to see at a glance the geographical distribution of sections and if there are areas that are lacking some sections. You might find that there are lots of Brownie units in one area but only one Guide unit, which would mean losing girls when they could be moving on to the next section.

Make a note of the venue that the units meet in. If all of the units are meeting in the same type of venue, it may be worth looking into other possibilities in the area. Some girls may feel uncomfortable meeting in certain places and locations, such as the school they attend or places of worship other than their own. Making a note of meeting places will help you to establish membership patterns in your area, be more inclusive and help to ensure guiding is open to all girls who would like to attend.

Local housing

Mark the areas where there is housing so the relationship between unit locations and where people live is clear. You may discover a new housing development, or that there is one planned for the near future, which could result in an influx of girls and potential volunteers.

Are there areas that have lots of units while other populated areas further away don't have any? How well are sparsely populated areas serviced?

You can find information about planned housing developments by contacting your local council offices.

Schools, colleges and universities

Knowing the location of schools, colleges and universities can help enormously with understanding the needs and potential of your area. Below are some examples.

- Plotting the location of schools will show where units are in relation to children of different ages. It is helpful to note what ages the schools are for, whether they are single- or mixed-sex and the demographics of the student population so you can work out what the local needs are.
- Are there school buildings in areas where units are needed? Have you thought of asking schools for permission to use their space for unit meetings? Schools, colleges and universities are excellent locations for unit meetings as they are safe, cater for a large number of people and are practical for before- or after-school meetings. You can also appeal for older students and staff to help as volunteers. (Bear in mind, however, that the costs for using these spaces may be high in some areas.)
- Schools can also be a good way to reach certain groups of girls and thus increase inclusion. They may also assist in identifying socially isolated girls who would benefit from guiding, such as those who are disaffected or in care, recent migrants to the community and those learning English as a new language.

Community centres and youth services

Identifying other provisions for youth groups will help you to gain a better understanding of when meetings might clash or what alternative venues are available. Plotting where other activities are located allows you to see what is provided locally and when. This information should be available from your local library, council or information centre.

You may find that there are activities at these venues that conflict with unit meetings and attendance. Could meetings be held before or after the other event, or the day of the meeting be changed or the venue shared?

There may also be an opportunity to link with other regular community activities and share volunteers. For example, you could hold a unit meeting immediately after another unit meeting or youth club session. This could allow for sharing of the same Leaders, transportation, venue and activities.

Public transport

In rural and isolated areas, facilities and services such as frequent public transport may be lacking. This may hinder a sense of wider community and may prevent girls from getting together for unit meetings.

Are your units accessible by safe and reliable public transport? This can make the difference between people attending meetings or not. Your local council will have information on public transport services in your area and it's a good idea to speak to local people to establish if they feel comfortable using the services.

As well as mapping where public transport operates, it is important to find out how regular the service is. Some services will only run limited timetables, especially at weekends and in the evenings, and this can seriously affect the ease and safety with which people can attend.

Plot on the map where potential and existing volunteers are located. Leaders, parents and adults with parental responsibility and Trefoil Guild members are all potential sources of transportation, and a car-sharing scheme may provide an alternative to public transport.

Number of Leaders

Are there units in your area that have lots of Leaders as well as units that are struggling to attract volunteers? It may be feasible to pool your resources and share Leaders across units until it is possible to recruit more. This may depend on the location of the units, meeting times and other factors but by working together you might help each other and keep units open. Go! reports for Waiting List Summaries will give you the number of active adult volunteers and will show you where you have more or less than you need.

Where more units are needed

Plotting the locations of units will reveal areas where there is a lack of units – either specific sections or guiding in general.

If an area contains too few girls to start individual section units, consider forming joint units instead. This will allow you to pool resources and keep costs down. As long as there are sufficient adults to ensure that the age-appropriate programme can be delivered, you will be able to meet the needs of several groups of girls.

Girls waiting to join

Waiting-to-join lists will show the areas and age groups of the girls who are waiting to join guiding. Ask the County Go! user to run a report on waiting list summaries to establish how many girls are waiting at which units, whether they are currently of joining age and how many volunteers are active at each unit. This will help you to assess the immediate need for more places or whether you have time to look into more options. Look into why the girls are waiting. Are the units in easily accessible areas? Has there been a new development or school built which has resulted in an influx of girls of a certain age group? Could the girls join different units in the area instead of the one they are waiting to join? Are some girls on more than one list? Mapping waiting-to-join lists will show what the issues are and how to help every girl to have the opportunity to get involved.

Case study: Judy Ellis - Guiding Volunteer, Shropshire

Judy Ellis undertook a mapping exercise as part of a project called Special 100 to prepare for the Centenary. Judy made a map of the County by visiting the County Council websites of the area, printing out local maps and joining them together. It was enlarged and laminated for ease of use.

Judy then sent a questionnaire to all Division and District Commissioners in the County to collect information about the number of girls currently involved, meeting places, where the girls came from and the catchments area of the local schools. The Commissioners were then all invited to a County meeting and asked to bring a map of their area with the relevant coloured stickers showing where the units were based.

The Commissioners plotted district and divisions boundaries on the large-scale map and they quickly noticed the places that fell outside of these areas where the girls couldn't access guiding even if they wanted to.

As a result, a Growing Guiding strategy was formed for the County to establish themselves in those areas and meet the needs of girls and young women more widely.

'Census data and waiting to join lists are helpful things to remember when mapping,' says Judy. 'When looking at new housing developments in rural areas, consult local village plans as well as Council information, as this can tell you a lot about the way an areas needs may change.'

Case study: Tracey Braziel - Guiding Volunteer, Armagh

Tracey Braziel used Google to find a map of the County and then removed unnecessary details to create a clear profile of the area.

'I took the map to a District and Division Commissioner Day where we looked at the County, what we had and how we could grow. We also aimed to identify difficulties in areas such as venues, boundaries and the number of leaders and girls. We marked the transport links, the towns and any other features that were important to local guiding. We then mapped the current units using colour-specific dots to represent sections.'

Something that Tracey and the other Commissioners found useful was plotting where units had closed so that they could discuss the reasons and whether the area would benefit from future units.

'The Commissioners found it very useful, as did I,' says Tracey. 'Things made sense when you saw them in context of physical Location. I had often wondered why we had no units to the west of the area, but then I saw the rather large hills! We noted that transport links seemed to play an important part in where our units opened.'

'We've had several meetings since we first carried out the exercise, and each time we use the map to re-evaluate the units, making any changes that have occurred and then using it as a basis for whatever topic we are tackling.'

Once you have established what the local area looks like and how the distribution of services and guiding links works with this, you should be in a better position to work out what your priorities are and which areas need to be developed.

Use the resources available to make the most of guiding in your area and involve everyone who shows an interest. Ask other areas for advice and share experiences. Use the resources available from Girlguiding to such as 'Flexible guiding, have you thought of?' and 'How to use Census information – and why you should' alongside the recruitment leaflets that explain the benefits and experiences Girlguiding offers. The mapping exercise, combined with knowledge and experience, will help you to make guiding available to more girls and young women and meet the needs of your local community!

For more information on geographical factors, see 'Participate: Rural and Isolated' on the Girlguiding website.

For more information on inclusion and hard-to-reach girls, see 'Participate: Disaffected young women' on the Girlguiding website.