



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

Girlguiding

Guidance for County Commissioners appointing District and Division Commissioners

One of your duties as County Commissioner is to appoint all new District and Division Commissioners.

However, if you find it hard to meet all the potential candidates and get to know them well enough to assess whether they are suitable for the role, you may choose to delegate part of the appointing task to the appropriate Division Commissioner on a case-by-case basis. If you do delegate, any decisions should still be made in consultation with you as the appointing Commissioner, as well as with the members of the District Team, who will know the person well. As County Commissioner you are responsible for appointing Division Commissioners in consultation with the Division Team.

Appointing Commissioners

Whether you are appointing a District or a Division Commissioner, it is good practice that a consultation process takes place and a consensus is reached with all members in the area. The existing team of members will know the needs of guiding in their area and need to be involved in deciding who their Commissioner should be.

If you do not feel that the person suggested is appropriate for the role, bear in mind that the local team will know her well and they may have a better understanding of the local needs. Try not to impose someone on the team who they are not comfortable with as this could affect the development of the District or Division - and ultimately the County.

Use discretion and keep any discussion regarding appointments confidential until the person is approached. In some areas it may be preferable to appoint two people to share the role. Also, it's worth bearing in mind that it may be better to leave the appointment vacant for a short while rather than make an inappropriate appointment.

Training Commissioners

District and Division Commissioners have a designate period of up to six months, during which time they will be working with a personal Mentor. At the end of the designate period you should meet the new Commissioner to discuss her progress.

You will have a crucial role to play in a Commissioner's development and progress throughout her term of office. Commissioners are key members of the County and they will need help and support from you. It is important that you offer them training on a regular basis and provide opportunities for them to gain a wide range of skills and knowledge to help them achieve their goals.

You must also ensure that Commissioners have regular opportunities to discuss their role with you or the appropriate member of the County Team.

Skills all Commissioners must have include:

- the ability to deal with difficult situations
- good communications
- the ability to use technology
- people skills
- time management.

It is important that someone works with the new Commissioner on her personal development and helps her formulate a personal action plan. Members at County, Country or Region, or national level can provide training on a wide range of topics including those listed above. Alternatively, a new Commissioner could seek training opportunities through an external body such as the local education authority, the Learning Skills Council, local voluntary sector forums, the Open University or other voluntary or statutory youth organisations.

Mentoring new District and Division Commissioners

A new Commissioner starts carrying out her role while in her designate period, during which time she is supported by her personal Mentor, with whom she should be able to develop a good relationship. It is important that the new Commissioner and Commissioner Mentor are carefully matched. You may choose to do this yourself or to appoint someone to do so.

It may be useful to set up a Commissioner Mentor Support Group to share good practice and perhaps occasionally mentor new Commissioners together in a group.

During this time the Mentor plays a key role in helping the Commissioner to understand her own role.

A personal Mentor should:

- have up-to-date knowledge of guiding
- understand and be able to inform the new Commissioner of Girlguiding's code of conduct and policies
- have knowledge and understanding of the Commissioner's role.

The Mentor's responsibilities include:

- making arrangements to meet with the new Commissioner
- checking she has a copy of the *Commissioner Handbook* and reads it
- helping the new Commissioner identify her existing skills, experience and knowledge
- supporting the new Commissioner in working out a personal action plan
- helping the new Commissioner understand her role, her personal development and what is expected of her
- ensuring that the new Commissioner is aware of her specific responsibilities regarding administration, finance, forms procedures and all other procedures
- helping arrange opportunities for relevant training where possible
- explaining the structure of guiding locally
- discussing the recruitment of new Leaders
- ensuring that the new Commissioner knows what help is available and where to get it
- maintaining contact with you as the appointing Commissioner.

Supporting District and Division Commissioners

Your Division and District Commissioners will look to you for encouragement, support and advice, which is essential to the smooth running of guiding in your area.

They spend the majority of their time recruiting, supporting and managing people; they should be encouraged to delegate as much of the paperwork as possible to someone else.

District and Division Commissioners need to be able to troubleshoot complex people problems. It is important that the County recognises this role and provides any necessary training and support.

Who should support the District and Division Commissioners?

Within the County you will need processes to ensure that all new Commissioners are linked with a Mentor who can support them through their designate period and beyond. However, it is important to recognise that some Commissioners will lose touch with their Mentors and will need access to other forms of support.

In some areas the County Commissioner herself will provide support to other Commissioners. However, in general the County Commissioner should focus on providing the County with direction and leadership. It may be appropriate for Assistant County Commissioners to have particular responsibilities for supporting Commissioners.

Keeping in regular, informal contact is a good way to ensure that local Commissioners do not feel overwhelmed.

Some Counties have established Commissioner support groups which meet together over coffee and discuss issues of concern. Support can also be given by telephone or email.

Helpful ideas

- Make sure each Commissioner knows how to access personal support from a Mentor, support group or designated member of the County Team.
- Ensure that someone from the County Team makes regular contact with the local Commissioners to check that all is well.
- Consider offering help for Leaders with difficulties within the County so that some of the burden is taken away from individual Commissioners.
- Give thanks and acknowledgement to the local Commissioners regularly for the work they do.
- Lead by example - keep your own workload manageable and expect others to do the same.
- Make sure everyone knows when it is a time to seek expert help and how to access it.
- Provide appropriate training in 'people intensive' functions such as recruitment.
- Encourage Commissioners to ensure that 'good guiding' is happening in their area.