

Guiding conversations

A Safe Space



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

Girlguiding

Introduction

As a member, you'll know that Girlguiding provides a safe space for girls where they can really be themselves and share the experience of growing up as a girl in today's world. It is Girlguiding's policy to make every effort to safeguard all its members - children, young people and adults alike - from physical, sexual and emotional harm while participating in guiding activities, and we take all reasonable steps to ensure this through relevant procedures and training. However, sometimes issues arise that can make providing a safe space more challenging. Using examples based on the questions our safety and complaints coordinator is frequently asked, and on research by other agencies working with young women, this *Guiding Conversation* aims to help you think about the potential obstacles to keeping girls and volunteers safe that you might face and how best to overcome these.

How to use this Guiding conversation

This conversation is designed to be flexible and includes a number of different scenarios for discussion at district or division meetings. Simply choose one or more topics which are relevant to you and use the talking points given after each scenario if you need help to get the conversation flowing.

During your discussion, you may find it useful to use the action sheet included at the end of this resource to record your responses for each scenario.

Some participants may be sensitive to the issues raised in the scenarios, so be considerate during your discussion. Make the group aware that if anyone is in need of further support they should speak with their local commissioner. Commissioners, please see page 3 for any additional support needs you may have.

A safe cyber space

Social networking websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, and online chat facilities are great for allowing people to connect with each other, and by taking precautions you can significantly reduce any risk of your

personal information being exploited while using them. As the role social media plays in young people's lives continues to grow, it is more important than ever to think through the ways you can advise members of Rangers, your Brownies and Guides, and even Rainbows, on how to be safe online.

You know that the girls have been using a social networking site to keep in contact with friends. You find out that they have been putting pictures online of themselves in their school uniform and posting private information such as their full name, date of birth and so on. However, you don't think that they are currently at risk.

AND/OR

During a unit meeting, one of the girls mentions that a man has been talking to her online and that he has been saying 'horrible things' to her. The man has told her that she will get in trouble if she tells her parents, and that they wouldn't believe her anyway, so it would be best if she didn't say anything about it. The man has also asked her to join him on different chat facilities so he can talk to her more and maybe even video chat.

Key questions

1. What action do you take (if any)?
2. What information is available from Girlguiding and other charities to support you?
3. What might the impact be on the girl(s) if you do/don't take action?

Links to resources for this and other scenarios can be found on pages 2 and 3.

A safe space for girls and volunteers

A safe space isn't just for young members; it's for volunteers too. Girlguiding provides training and guidance in order to help you feel safe and supported while working with girls and other members, but sometimes just using your common sense and being aware of your own actions and those of others can help you to protect yourself.

You find out that a leader has been texting 14- to 16-year-old girls without including another adult in

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the discussion. You don't think the messages are about anything inappropriate and the policy regarding private communications is best practice rather than essential.

AND/OR

A leader has started shouting at the girls during meetings more often. One or two parents have started to express concerns that she smells of alcohol when they go to pick the girls up, and another leader has mentioned that she is concerned about the individual's recent behaviour during meetings.

Key questions

1. Should you speak to someone? If so, who?
2. What other action can you take?
3. What might the impact be on the leader if you do/don't take action?

Links to resources for this and other scenarios can be found on page 3.

Safe relationships

When it comes to personal relationships with friends, family and romantic partners, you will encounter different issues with different age groups - and you will need to bear this in mind when handling your concerns.

You notice that a girl is receiving a lot of texts from her boyfriend. He wants to know where she is and what she's doing. Her appearance has changed a lot recently and you find out from the girl's friends that she keeps cancelling plans to meet them. You see him alternating between being nice to her and calling her names. You also find out from the girl that she's in trouble with her parents because her grades are slipping at school.

AND/OR

During a unit meeting a girl talks to you about her mother, who is angry a lot of the time. The girl says she enjoys guiding as an escape from home. You know the girl's mother is a single parent who has found it difficult to cope alone and that care has been inconsistent. You notice some bruising on the girl's body but it could be, as the girl claims, simply caused by clumsiness.

Key questions

1. What action should you take (if any)?
2. Who is there to talk to?
3. What might the impact be on the girl if you do/don't take action?

Links to resources for this and other scenarios can be found on page 3.

Did you know that Girlguiding has a Girls in Action project which aims to get girls of all ages speaking out about violence against women? Find out more about Girls in Action: Change the story on our website: www.girlguiding.org.uk > About us > Girls in Action > AVA: Change the story.

Safety concerns

If a girl is in immediate danger you must take action by contacting the NSPCC (0808 800 5000), your local authority's Safeguarding Children's Board or Unit, or the police. Otherwise it is advisable to use discretion when dealing with confidential information. If you wish to contact the NSPCC for advice anonymously, simply do not mention any personal information.

If you are unsure, consult *A Safe Space* to decide what action ought to be taken. Girlguiding is here to talk to about any concerns you might have about a girl's safety. If you have any queries about a young member or volunteer, please email safeguarding@girlguiding.org.uk.

Resources

A safe cyber space

Girlguiding's online safety guidelines - the first source of support for concerned Leaders (www.girlguiding.org.uk > Members' area > What's happening? > Our online community > Guidelines).

My Brownie web safe code - online safety guidelines for Brownies (www.girlguiding.org.uk > Brownies > Web Safe Code).

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Guide web safe code - online safety guidelines for Guides (www.girlguiding.org.uk > Guides > News and events > Guide web safe code).

Rangers web safe code - online safety guidelines for Rangers (www.girlguiding.org.uk > Rangers > Resources > Web safe code).

www.ceop.police.uk - The Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre's video resources for parents and young people of all ages that show the best way to use the internet safely.

A safe space for girls and volunteers

A Safe Space - provides guidelines which are a must-read for Leaders and details the policies and procedures which are in place to protect both girls and volunteers (www.girlguiding.org.uk > Members' area > Resource library > Trainers' resources > Training resources > A Safe Space).

Safe relationships

Let's Talk - these guidelines provide information about the best ways to discuss relationships with girls of different ages (www.girlguiding.org.uk > Members' area > Running your unit > Safety > Let's Talk).

Ending violence against women and girls in the UK

- guidance from the Home Office policy on this issue (www.homeoffice.gov.uk > Policies).

Safety concerns

www.nspcc.org.uk - The NSPCC provides free, confidential advice to concerned adults and can help you to decide whether or not to make a referral.

www.childline.org.uk - ChildLine provides great direct support for young people.

For local commissioners

If you require extra support in running this conversation please speak to your county commissioner, or email safeguarding@girlguiding.org.uk.

During the course of your discussions, a question may be asked or an issue raised that you are unsure of how to tackle. In anticipation of this, you may like to provide a 'question box' for participants to use at the end of the meeting. This will allow you time to respond accurately and appropriately to any queries by using the suggested resources or emailing safeguarding@girlguiding.org.uk. It could also be used to help you identify any training needs for your district or division.



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What actions should I take?

Response	When is it necessary?	Who should be involved?	Impact/outcome
eg Reporting a situation to the NSPCC, police or social services	When a leader thinks that a child is in immediate danger	Leader, the child, commissioner	The agency spoken to will decide the appropriate action to keep the child safe.

This action sheet is aimed at providing you with a space to think through the appropriate actions for the scenarios described in this *Guiding conversation*. It is not designed to be a log book for your safety concerns.