

Guiding Conversations



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

Girlguiding

Giving girls a voice in local guiding

Have you ever wondered how to make 'girls in the lead' a reality? Do you know how other people in your area support girls to make decisions in their units? Have you shared your own ideas?

What makes Girlguiding unique and stand out from other youth organisations is the Guiding Method, which is made up of the five essentials:

- working together in small groups
- sharing a commitment to a common standard
- having a balanced and varied programme
- caring for the individual
- encouraging self-government and decision-making.

These five essentials should be delivered in a way that supports girls to decide for themselves the activities they do.

Putting girls in the lead

Within Girlguiding, the terms 'girl', 'youth' or 'young member' apply to all girls and young women aged 5 (or 4 in Ulster) to 25. Putting girls and young women in the lead means that their programme is tailored to their needs and interests. It also allows them to develop leadership, communication, teamwork and decision-making skills, as well as many others.

Putting girls in the lead can be done in the simplest of ways. As a Leader from 30th Westminster Brownies says,

'The girls in my Brownie unit asked if they could visit a Brownie who had been ill for quite some time so they could cheer her up. It wasn't appropriate for all of them to visit her at home but other Leaders suggested the girls think of some other way of letting the Brownie know we were thinking about her. So the girls voted for their favourite idea and ended up making a massive Get Well Soon banner, with each Six taking responsibility for a part of the banner, then joining it together. It really felt like we were working in partnership with the Brownies.'

Girls make their own decisions all the time throughout guiding. The youngest Rainbow choosing a game or a song, Brownies deciding the next badge they want to do, Guides doing their Camp Permit, and Senior Section members leading a local event for younger girls are all examples of good practice. Girls and young women

have the imagination to suggest their own programme; as Leaders, we simply need to work with them to put their ideas into action, and help them to develop their skills, knowledge and ideas as they move up through the sections.

One Commissioner remarks:

'At our last District meeting we discussed the possibility of asking our Senior Section unit to run the afternoon section of our annual District Day. Some of the Leaders were worried that not all age groups would be catered for but we decided to try it as an experiment. The Senior Section girls organised a wacky races event that had a medieval theme - and put in so much energy and enthusiasm. Every girl managed to get covered in water and mud at some point and some of the Leaders did too! The Senior Section girls needed some support to deliver the afternoon but all of the Leaders were on hand to take instruction from the girls. A year on, and the races are the one part of the day that have stuck in my Guides' heads.'

Girlguiding is committed to ensuring that girls' opinions are recognised, valued and acted upon at all levels. To support this our young members should be assisted by their Leaders to plan, deliver and evaluate their programme as appropriate. This will make us a truly girl-centred organisation. Leaders sharing good practice and supporting each other will help to ensure that girls are truly in the lead.

Starting your District/Division conversation

1. How do we gather and use the opinions of young members in our unit at the moment?
2. How could we make sure that young members have sufficient opportunities and strong skills to take the lead?
3. How can we involve more young members in the planning, delivery and evaluation of local events and projects?
4. When planning the next programme what will each of us do to include young members in the decision-making? (Why not share your answers at the next meeting?)

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Further information

- *Participation on a plate* resource - coming soon
- *Going Away with Guiding* - see the 'Programme' chapter (see your relevant section)
- *Guidance notes for Leaders*.

District action plan

Title Giving girls a voice in local guiding

Action	Date	Person/Group
eg the girls of 1st Anytown Brownies will plan their own Brownie Holiday programme next year	March 2012 (planning from November 2011)	Leaders of 1st Anytown Brownies