

Guiding conversations

Room for just one more?

Did you know that if every unit in Girlguiding increased in size by one more girl, around 27,500 more girls in the UK would have access to everything guiding has to offer? We want every girl in the UK to have the opportunity to take part in guiding, which is why we'd like to grow our membership. Large-scale growth seems like a big challenge, but if we all make room for one more girl, together we can make a really big difference.

How can the units in your local area grow by just one more girl so that we can give lots of girls a chance to be part of guiding? Here are some ideas.

Spread the word!

Most of us don't really go out of our way to recruit girls - we rely on word of mouth to get them through the door. Imagine how easy it would be to grow if we made a point of inviting them in!

'A few units in my area got together to do a recruitment drive at a local fête. We set up tables with lots of activities and took girls from our units along. Our stalls were very busy! The leaders got a chance to chat to the parents while our girls showed local children how to do the activities we'd brought along. We ended the day with the details of the parents of ten girls who wanted to join a unit.'

- Leader, Girlguiding Weaverin.

There are a number of recruitment resources (see Further information, over leaf) available free of charge through Girlguiding shops to help you get started. Why not use them to help recruitment locally? If you have a waiting-to-join list, could you offer a place to just one or two girls on it?

Breaking down the barriers

Sometimes there seem to be barriers to growing a unit by just a few girls, but how real are they? For example, our suggested adult-to-girls ratios often make leaders think twice about whether they are able to grow their unit. However, Girlguiding's suggested adult-to-child ratios are flexible within the meeting place and so Leadership teams can make their own judgement about how many girls they can take on. The Girlguiding ratios become mandatory only outside of the meeting place, such as on a day trip. The ratio the leadership team is comfortable with



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in the meeting place will depend on the size of the meeting place and how experienced the unit team is.

Girls vote with their feet so it's really important that as Leaders we think about the existing members when growing our units. Can you offer the same high-quality programme and safe space to a bigger unit with the current Leadership team? If the answer to this question is yes then what are you waiting for?

There may be other barriers (perceived or real) to increasing the number of girls in your area. While talking these through as a group of leaders someone may come up with a simple solution that no one else has thought of yet! This could be a new way of managing waiting-to-join lists, a different strategy to reach a group of girls who have never thought about guiding, or even new ideas for managing a slightly larger unit.

Working together

One way to keep new growth going is to take a look at how you work together as an area. If one unit is full-to-overflowing, could the leaders help other units to increase their numbers instead? Could you reduce the time girls spend waiting to join by managing lists as a local area instead of unit by unit? Are all girls able to move up easily up to the next section? Could units work together to make that transition easier?

'At the end of term I invited a Rangers leader in our district to our Guide meeting. She did a session with all of the older Guides so that they could see what Rangers would be like. I encouraged all of the older girls to join in with the session, not just those going to Rangers after the summer, so that they could see where they will be going next. Rangers Leader and I have kept in touch and our Guides get plenty of chances to see Rangers before they move on.'

- Leader, Girlguiding Streatham.

Why not talk together about how the units in your local area can grow by just a few girls so that Girlguiding can grow by a lot more?

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Questions

- What ideas do you have to increase each unit in your area by just one more girl? Could you manage more than one girl?
- What are the barriers to growing your units and how can these be overcome?
- What will each leadership team in the area do over the next term to increase each unit size?
- How will leaders in the area work together to recruit and keep girls in guiding?

Further information

- Autumn 2011 *guiding* magazine article ‘Ready to grow’
- www.girlguidingshop.co.uk or p59-61 of the 2011/12 *Guiding Essentials* catalogue for leaflets and postcards
- Discover just how flexible ratios are in *The Guiding Manual*. Visit http://guidingmanual.guk.org.uk/policies/safety_and_safeguarding/adult_to_child_ratios.aspx
- Maintain the quality of guiding in your unit as you grow with *Good guiding is...* at www.girlguiding.org.uk/default.aspx?page=1245

Action plan

Title

Action

Date

Person/Group

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