



Managing a team



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Girlguiding

Managing a team

Sometimes a particular task, such as an event, may require a new team of its own. If you need to form a team, you should first approach your Commissioner. She may invite suitable members to join the team or delegate this task to you. If this is the case, this document will help guide you through leading an effective team.

Selecting a team

Firstly, consider why you need a team – is it to share elements of your job or to manage a specific task? Be aware of the roles or tasks you need to fill, the knowledge, skills and experience you will require to do this, and the amount of time you need your volunteers to commit to. This will give focus to your discussion with your Commissioner.

Leading a team

Leadership has been described as winning the hearts and minds of those in your team to achieve a common purpose. Try to create a friendly, cooperative atmosphere amongst your team with democratic discussion and decision making. This way the team will work better together and whatever goals you've set will be achieved more easily.

Successful teams have reasonable aims and objectives which they agree themselves and which fit in with the overall aims of local guiding. Don't forget that local aims should also complement Girlguiding's strategic aims. If necessary, you should be able to represent the interests and opinions of the team to others, for example at Division, County or Country/Region or Association meetings or to the general public.

One of the many advantages of guiding is that you will meet lots of people, both girls and adults. As an Adviser or Coordinator, you should be sensitive to each person's strengths and weaknesses and help them sympathetically and confidentially with any difficulties and problems. Remember to show appreciation for individual work, and if you need to criticise, find some kind words first and be constructive in your criticism.

Working with an inherited team

It is possible that you will work with a team that you have inherited and who were appointed by a Commissioner in their own Division, County or Country/Region.

If the performance of a member of your team consistently falls below that expected of them, you should raise your concerns with their appointing Commissioner and find a solution together.

Working effectively as a team

A productive, high-performing team will:

- have clearly stated, realistic objectives
- have a shared sense of purpose
- make the best use of its resources
- have confidence in its ability to succeed
- review its progress
- build on experience
- ride out storms

- operate in an atmosphere of openness and trust
- communicate successfully.

Think about how your team can achieve this.

Team relations

It's important to meet as a team, both to support one another and to evaluate what you do. Think about the following.

- Has everything happened as you planned?
- Did you have to alter your plans because circumstances changed?
- Were the plans successful?
- When things go wrong, can you discuss it amicably and give mutual support rather than attribute blame?
- Can any member suggest a way in which working as a team could be improved?
- Would training in a particular area help?

Spare some time for social occasions so you can get to know one another better. When you have successes remember to thank your team, celebrate your achievements and use the opportunity to boost the team's morale!

Managing a remote team

As an Adviser or Coordinator, you may be asked to lead a team of people who won't necessarily live near you. For example, you may be a Region Adviser who links into all the County Advisers in your Region. Or you may be asked to be part of an event planning team over a wide area, managing 15-20 people, 300 miles apart.

Here are some tips on how to manage a team remotely.

- If a new team will be working remotely from each other, make sure that it is launched at a 'face-to-face' meeting to enable everyone to get to know each other. As team leader, it is vital that you help to build relationships from the beginning. Members need to feel valued for who they are, not just what they do.
- Take a photograph of everyone and make sure all the team have a copy. This will allow people to visualise/remember members of the team when you speak on the phone.
- Create a constitution or mission statement (remember that some teams in guiding will have existing constitutions) for your team or project. The agreement will provide the team with shared guidelines about working together. The agreements can cover issues such as team behaviour, team processes, communication and problem solving, as well as the overall team purpose and results needed.
- Maximise face-to-face time. Get the team together as often as finances will permit. These meetings will be invaluable in strengthening relationships and solving problems.
- Building trust at a distance is difficult and opportunities for misunderstanding are great. It is therefore vital that team members feel 'connected' through all communications.
- Provide clarity and focus. Spend time with your team clarifying your purpose and individual roles and responsibilities. There can be ambiguity when working apart and this shouldn't be made worse by team members not knowing what their role is or what they are expected to deliver. Make sure each team member not only understands their own objectives, but those of the other team members as well.
- Respect others' situations. Most, if not all, of your team members will be volunteers. All team members should know the appropriate times to call each other and any days

that are off limits due to cultural, family or other commitments. Rotate team meeting times, so that no one team member or members are continually inconvenienced.

- Keep all team communications and records regularly updated. As the team leader, you will need to think about the most appropriate way to do this, perhaps via a Yahoo Group as well as tele- or videoconferencing.
- Manage teleconferencing effectively – it is very important to manage and facilitate individual contributions.
- You will need to be an effective listener, particularly during telephone meetings when there is no visual contact or signals. Listen carefully and pay attention to different kinds of clues such as silence, tone and energy levels towards the project and each other.
- Hopefully you won't have to deal with any conflict in the team. However, if a serious conflict does arise, you should handle it face-to-face. Distance can create more opportunity for misunderstandings or misinterpretation.
- Because your team members will reside remotely it is even more important to allocate time to find out how they are getting on, what issues they are facing and how they feel about things. When working remotely it is all too easy to focus on the task and forget about the individual.

Remember – being part of a successful team can be an incredibly rewarding experience, a lot of fun and a great way to make new guiding friends.

Managing meetings

Meetings are a great way to:

- share information
- plan events
- respond to events and enquiries
- discuss and solve problems
- give everyone in your team support
- share the load.

There is no point in having a meeting just for the sake of it – people's time is precious and sometimes a meeting may not be necessary. Before a meeting happens, consider the following.

- Why is the meeting necessary?
- Should the meeting be formal or informal?
- Would a training session be more suitable?
- If the meeting is formal, does it have a constitution/terms of reference and membership list?
- Are the right people involved?
- Who will chair the meeting?
- Is there an agenda?
- Who will take notes or minutes?
- What is the minimum number of people required to make a decision (a quorum)? Who can vote?
- Who will book facilities, arrange refreshments etc?
- Who should be informed of any decisions made at the meeting and given copies of the minutes?

Choosing a venue

A suitable venue should be booked in good time. Small meetings can be held in someone's home but larger meetings may need the facilities available in a hall. Check that the venue is convenient, suitable and comfortable for everyone, and that it:

- is big enough
- is warm enough
- will be free from interruptions
- has suitable chairs and a table, if it's formal
- has comfortable chairs, if it's informal
- has the necessary equipment, eg a flipchart, an overhead projector, a photocopier
- is possible to set up a crèche, or make refreshments if necessary
- is easy to get to and parking spaces are available.

Make sure everyone knows how to get to the venue (you could enclose a map with your agenda) and suggest lift-sharing.

Please remember that if you are locking up a building, don't lock it up on your own in the dark – always keep yourself safe.

Setting a date

There are a few ways of arranging dates so think about what suits you and your team best.

Set a date when something comes up that needs discussion.

- Advantage – you always have a specific reason for the meeting, rather than having it just because it's booked. You can also get a quick decision, rather than waiting until the next scheduled meeting.
- Disadvantage – it is time-consuming to get in touch with everyone and to find a date that suits all. In addition, last-minute meetings don't give members a schedule of meetings to work towards and they might prefer to have this time to prepare.

At the end of each meeting you could set the date for the next one.

- Advantage – you will know how quickly you will need to meet again and can discuss suitable dates face-to-face.
- Disadvantage – by the time the next date comes up, it may turn out that you don't really need a meeting after all.

You could book several dates (eg for the whole of the next year) in one go.

- Advantage – everyone is likely to be free because the meetings are booked so long in advance.
- Disadvantage – it's quite a rigid arrangement and you may have misjudged how often the team needs to meet.

Choosing a time

Try to pick a time that is suitable for everyone. Holiday times of the year, for example, will be more difficult to get everyone together. Generally it can be difficult for people to fit in meetings around work and childcare or around studying, or working in the evenings and at weekends for Senior Section members.

Make sure everyone has enough time to get to the meeting and that the meeting doesn't end too late. If this can't be arranged during the week, consider weekend meetings. It is also an idea to vary the day of the week you meet on, so that all team members get the chance to attend.

Compiling an agenda

When you compile your agenda think about the following questions.

- What do you hope to achieve during the meeting?
- In what order will you discuss the items? (It can be helpful to deal with the biggest item first, so that you are all fresh when you discuss it.)
- Is there anything from the last meeting that still needs to be on the agenda? (eg discussing the next stage of an event.)
- Do you need to break? If so, will there be a natural break in the meeting which would make a good time for refreshments?

To make the agenda clear to everyone and easy to use, include the following.

- The date, times (start and finish) of the meeting and the venue.
- Notices to give out rather than discuss.
- Agenda points to be discussed;
 - you may want to make notes next to points which require people to bring something or for those who will be leading or contributing to it
 - you may wish to set objectives for some items, such as 'a decision must be made' or how long you would like to spend on each point.
- The date of the next meeting.
- Any other business – this does not have to be at the end of your meeting why not put it at the beginning or in the middle?

Send out the agenda in good time prior to the meeting, so that people are clear on what is going to be discussed and can prepare for it. Here is a suggested timetable for preparing your agenda.

1. Set a meeting date.
2. Ask people to send you agenda items and papers that need to be read, two weeks before the meeting.
3. Compile information and send out the agenda and any papers to all participants a week before the meeting.
4. Have the meeting.
5. Send out minutes of the meeting within two weeks of it taking place.

If your team meets fairly often, then you will need to send things out in less time, but try to be consistent with what you do so people know where they stand.

Preparation

Make sure you are properly prepared before the meeting and have read everything. Put all your papers in the same order as the agenda so that you don't miss anything out. If there are items that you think everyone will take lots of notes for, put these notes on a handout so that people can concentrate on the discussion rather than taking notes. Collate these handouts as well as any forms and other items in advance.

Your role as chairman

It is up to you to maintain a team approach, creating the right atmosphere so that the meeting is lively, interesting and a positive experience for those attending.

It is also your job to do the following.

- Introduce any new members, visitors or team members who have not attended a meeting before. Don't assume everyone knows everyone else.

- Stick to the times set – start and end on time!
- Keep the discussion relevant, don't let people get sidetracked. Judge how long the discussion on each item should last and help the meeting move along.
- But also be careful not to miss any valuable contribution by rushing. If a discussion looks like it could go on for some time and this would be useful, think about setting up a separate meeting for those involved (or get them to meet immediately after your meeting if everyone is happy to do this).
- Make sure that only one person is speaking at a time.
- Make sure everyone gets a say.
- Listen carefully.
- Summarise periodically.
- Clarify and minute who is doing what and by when.

Notes of meetings

- Notes should be an accurate record of what was decided at a meeting. They should not be so detailed as to state everything that was said, but should record enough background information to show why decisions were made.
- Notes should be clear and unambiguous, so that someone reading them in a year or two's time can understand the decision and why it was made.
- Notes should have an action column with details of who is responsible for what and by when.
- In minutes, ie in a formally constituted committee, the names of the proposer and seconder of a recommendation should be noted, together with a record of the vote (how many for/against/abstained).
- Formal minutes are not necessary for all meetings; informal notes may be more appropriate in many cases.

You don't have to take the notes yourself - perhaps you could ask another person in the group to do it?

Managing different personalities at your meeting

New team members may need more support until they feel comfortable with the meeting situation.

- Telephone the new person, as well as send her the agenda – it will help her feel welcome.
- Ask another Leader to pick her up as she may like to come with someone else. Otherwise, you could ensure another Leader is ready to welcome her when she arrives.
- Make sure she has an opportunity to share her thoughts and ideas if she wishes.
- Ensure she has been sent the minutes of the previous meeting so that she has some of the background of what you are all talking about.

Some people, intentionally or not, will stop your meeting running smoothly. Here are a few tips for dealing with them.

- **The quarrelsome type** – stay calm and stop her monopolising by bringing others into the discussion and, if the complaint is genuine, offer to discuss it later.
- **The uninterested type** – try to illustrate how the matter might affect her and direct questions to her to encourage participation.
- **The persistent questioner** – pass her question back to her to draw out her view.
- **The shy type** – draw her out by asking questions you know she can answer. Give credit when possible.

- **The uncooperative type** – try to illustrate how the matter might affect her personally.
- **The talkative type** – thank her for her contribution and redirect the question to another team member.
- **The type who never turns up** – build up a relationship with her by finding out her strengths and interests. Try to give her a specific role for the meeting so that she has a reason to turn up.
- **The quibbling type who concentrates on minor details** – politely ask the group if this is relevant, or suggest it be deferred.
- **The type who whispers to her neighbours** – pause the meeting so that the silence makes the person stop whispering or invite the whisperer to share her comments with the group.

After the meeting

Within two weeks of the meeting, send out the minutes with a reminder of information, replies or action required, including a deadline if it is not for the next meeting.

You may also find it helpful to look back at the meeting and review how it went and see if there is anything you can do to improve it next time.

- Did you achieve your objectives?
- Was the agenda used and adhered to? Did it work?
- Did the participants enjoy the meeting and find it valuable?
- Was the venue suitable?
- Would you do anything differently next time?
- Were all actions noted and allocated to a team member? Were they given realistic timescales for completion and a date to follow up progress?

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