
Our guide to youth involvement

**Helping you to deliver
youth-shaped Scouting**

www.scouts.scot/youthinvolvement



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Youth involvement – strategy

Young people should be taking on leadership responsibilities and shaping their Scouting experiences.

Building on our work in this area by giving young people opportunities to use their voice is an important part of developing the leaders of the future. We believe that if young people are shaping their Scouting, they will improve Scouting and area more likely to achieve their top awards.

Youth involvement helps to make Scouting remain relevant and helps us to meet the needs of the youth involved. It also gives the youth members the chance to decide what they want to do within their section as well as in the District.

Youth involvement means young people doing the following:

- Sharing any and all ideas they have
- Teaching and supporting adult members
- Learning from each other's skills and experiences
- Assisting with programme planning; activities and camps both within your Groups and your District
- Helping to keep Scouting relevant

Youth involvement wall

The wall was created to help show the development of youth involvement in Districts, Regions and at national level. It shows what level youth involvement may start at, what it will grow to, with the help of the Youth Advisory Groups and the support of (see below). Level 1 is present when there is no youth involvement and level 7 is the ideal level of youth involvement.



What can leaders do?

For youth involvement to work within a Group and a District, the youth members need to have support, advice and encouragement.

Encouraging our youth members to be more involved in what we do is important as it allows us to keep Scouting interesting and relevant for young people.

Leaders can help several ways:

- Let young people decide what they are going to do each term (support them by helping to accommodate their ideas).
- Let young people take it in turns to help lead the weekly sessions (give them advice and help along the way with things such as locations, booking, times and risk assessments).
- Encourage Explorer Scouts to help as Young Leaders at other Sections and share their knowledge and experience.
- Support young people's ideas and work with them to improve their skills, as well as your own.
- By using the youth involvement toolkit.

Both Scouts Scotland and UK Scouts provide resources that can help leaders start thinking about and applying Youth-Shaped Scouting into their programmes.

You'll find programme ideas on the Scout Scotland [website](#).

UK Scouting similarly also has a number of programme resources that are currently available [online](#).

What is a Youth Advisory Group?

In Scotland, we have created a system of Youth Advisory Groups to support and lead on Youth Involvement. In Scotland, every District and Region should have a Youth Advisory Group, which will be supported by the National Youth Advisory Group. The National Youth Advisory Group will advise the Scouts Scotland Board of Trustees on issues and policies that Young People are interested in.

Some issues that Youth Advisory Groups have been focusing on are:

- Groups – supporting the development of youth-shaped programmes in all Sections.
- District or Regional Events – reviewing and developing camps – sometimes as members of the core team, supporting and developing fundraising activities.
- Programme – organising and developing Explorer Belts, organising and reviewing Duke of Edinburgh expeditions, reviewing the provision of Scouting in areas of deprivation.
- Strategic development – being consulted on development plans, being members of search groups and adult appointment committees.
- National Events – AGM & Council in conference, representing Scout Scotland at official events.
- Youth Approved Awards – Approving the relevant Youth Approved Award for Groups/District/Regions.

There are many possible types of Youth Advisory Groups that can be organised in different ways. We recommend having a core group of young people who rotate membership every 1-2 Years.

An Advisory Group can be formed by young people at a District/Regional Event that is specifically run to organise an Advisory Group or it can be created by a number of young people from a District or Regional Event (i.e. a camp). However, ALL young people must have the opportunity to join their District or Regional Advisory Group if they want to. Each Youth Advisory Group will elect a Chairperson (known in Scotland as the District/Regional Youth Commissioner) but not to be confused with Youth Commissioners appointed elsewhere in UK. Each Youth Advisory Group at all levels should aim to pass up their notes so that information can be shared with the National Youth Advisory Group. The National Youth Advisory Group will also pass down the notes of their meetings, to all District/ Region Advisory Groups. This is reliant on us having an accurate list of Groups and their members.

Welcome to the Youth Approved Award

The Youth Approved Award will support adults and young people at all levels to provide meaningful youth involvement to Scouts in Scotland and enhance the fun and exciting programme delivered across the country.

This Scouts Scotland award sets standards for youth involvement that you can benchmark against, and celebrates the work you have done while also identifying areas of improvement.

The Youth Approved Award has four different levels: Foundation; Bronze; Silver and Gold, which are progressive in nature and help you to aspire towards a Scouting experience, which is shaped by young people in partnership with adults.

Pyramid structure

The Youth Approved Award is a pyramid, which has four sides; one each to represent Scout Groups, Districts, Regions and the country as to be truly youth shaped, youth involvement needs to be embraced at all levels.

The strongest pyramids have solid foundations and that is where it all starts for Scout Groups, Districts, Regions and even Scouts Scotland! By completing just three requirements, you can shout loud and proud that you support youth involvement and are committed to involving young people in leadership and decision making at all levels of Scouting in Scotland.

Progression

Thereafter, each layer is different to recognise the different responsibilities of Scout Groups, Districts, Regions and the country. Young people decided the order of the layers based on the responsibilities that they felt were most relevant to them.

Once you have satisfied the Foundation Youth Approved requirements, the Bronze Youth Approved Award can be achieved by completing a further six challenges. The challenges are tailored to each level of Scouting and different themes such as programme and activities, peer leadership and training.

Assessment

Youth members will be responsible for the assessment of Youth Approved Awards and this will be done through our various Youth Advisory Groups although interim arrangements will apply where these have not yet been set up.

How to apply

When you feel that you have met the requirements for a Youth Approved Award, you can apply via Scouts Scotland using an online form and we will ensure it is directed to the correct group. Typically, the District Youth Advisory Groups will assess Scout Groups (and its sections), the Regional Youth Advisory Groups will assess Districts and so on.

Visit the Scouts Scotland website for resources and information about the Youth Approved Award.

- www.scouts.scotland/youthapproved

District Advisory Group

District Youth Commissioner

(Elected Chairperson)

8 – 14 District Young Advisors

District Commissioner

District Chair

Assistant Regional
Commissioner Youth
Involvement

Regional Youth
Commissioner

Assistant District
Commissioner Youth
Involvement
District Explorer Scout
Commissioner
District Scout Network
Commissioner

Regional Advisory Group

Regional Youth Commissioner
(Elected Chairperson)

8-14 Regional Young Advisors

Regional
Commissioner

Regional Chair

SHQ Commissioner
Youth Involvement

Scottish Youth
Commissioner

Assistant Regional
Commissioner Youth
Involvement

Assistant Regional
Commissioner(s)
Section Support

ADC/ARC Youth Involvement Commissioner

In Scotland, all Districts and Regions are encouraged to appoint an Assistant District (Regional) Commissioner (Youth Involvement). They will support all members of the District or Region to have better youth involvement and help shape Scouting through partnerships of adults and young people.

An Assistant District (Regional) Commissioner (Youth Involvement) is appointed by the District or Regional Commissioner and is subject to the adult appointments process. The adult can be aged 18 and over with no upper limit and this appointment is about getting the right person for the role.

Chair of the District Youth Advisory Group/Regional Advisory Group

In Scotland, the members of the Youth Advisory Group – young people and adults in partnership – are empowered to choose one of the youth members to become their Chair (Youth Commissioner). The Chair (Youth Commissioner) will represent them and have responsibility for chairing and co-ordinating the work of the Youth Advisory Group.

The Chair (Youth Commissioner) can be an Explorer Scout or Scout Network member and aged between 14 and 25. The Chair (Youth Commissioner) is elected by the Youth Advisory Group instead of being appointed by the District or Regional Commissioner.

If the Chair (Youth Commissioner) is aged 18 or over, they can be recorded on Compass as a Chair of Youth Advisory Group. This will allow them to get youth involvement communications similar to Youth Commissioners elsewhere in UK. There is no requirement for PVG, appointments committee approval or training.

Whereas a Youth Commissioner elsewhere in the UK is appointed by the District or County Commissioner, must be aged between 18 and 25, is an adult appointment and subject to a criminal record check, the appointments process and completion of a Wood Badge.

Assistant District Commissioner – Youth Involvement

Role	Assistant District Commissioner – Youth Involvement
Responsible To	District Commissioner
Direct Support	SHQ Commissioner – Youth Involvement
Reporting Mechanism	ARC – YI Youth Involvement Co-Ordination Group
Meeting Platforms	District Youth Advisory Group
Responsible For	Co-ordinate District Youth Advisory Group Co-ordinate District level project & events Develop link & support Group/Unit Youth Involvement Development With DESC'S & GSL's Support Group/Unit Youth Involvement projects & events

Getting started with youth involvement

Introduction

Getting input from young people in the running of your Group, District or Region can be a daunting prospect. This booklet will provide a framework so you can arrange opportunities whereby young people can give you their ideas and input in a structured format to help them shape Scouting and the way we work.

This booklet is intended for all adults working with young people in Scouting, and can be used to develop opportunities for young people to engage with adults. Each section covers a stage of the planning, delivery and review of the youth involvement process.

The best way to engage young people is face to face – digital feedback can be unreliable, as with so many other demands on young peoples' time and attention they may not respond. Arranging an event that young people want to attend and getting their input while they're there is one of the best ways to get honest feedback and comments. This booklet will outline the steps to consider in arranging such an event.

01 The idea

When first thinking about planning an event, consider what outcome you want – what information or feedback do you want from young people? This will likely dictate the format of the event, size, duration, location etc.

You will also need to consider what attraction there is for young people to attend – what will they get out of participating? This may be practical activities or games taking place at the event, or be a defined goal or outcome to the project which they may have an interest in.

It is important at an early stage to agree the scope and type of youth involvement with key adults in your area at the level that the feedback will be implemented. Without agreement that the young peoples' feedback will be acted upon there is no point in asking their opinions in the first place.

02 Planning

Consider who is best involved in planning the event – it may be a group of key adults or a core group of young people.

What should the event be called? Do not call the event a “forum” – this makes it sound like a meeting, rather than an engaging and exciting event. Be sure the name and topic is something that is of interest to the young people, otherwise it may be a quiet event!

Is funding available for this event or your efforts? Check with your District, Region or Scouts Scotland to see if grant funding for your particular project is available.

What location will be best for young people to get together? Consider geography, sure that young people will not have too far to travel. Will you be able to assist with travel expenses? The location may also be influenced by the desired outcomes – for example, feedback on local campsite activities may be best held at the campsite.

As with all activities in Scouting, it is important to consider issues of safeguarding and safety. Depending on the event, parental consent may be required and risk assessments should be completed by the organising team as with any Scouting activities.

03 Recruiting

Think about how many young people you want to attend your event. You may want to canvas views from a wide range of young people, or you may want to recruit a small working group depending on the outcomes you are looking for.

How will you make young people aware of your event? Social media is a quick and cheap way to get information to young people quickly, but remember that not everyone uses it so you need to consider additional ways to communicate to people, including Leaders.

At a local level, it is also worth attending group meetings to explain your event and its purpose to young people directly. This is very often the best way to spread the word to young people, but remember to check with Group leaders first.

04 Running the event

The event itself will be like running any other Scouting event in terms of logistics, catering, accommodation, activities etc. Scouting guidelines for running these events should be followed. If you are expecting a large number of young people, remember that you need a greater number of adults to maintain adult-to-youth ratios and to run feedback bases or other activities.

Be sure that all of the people helping run the event understand the outcomes you want, and stay focussed on the purpose of the activity. Depending on the feedback and the event you may not want adults to be too heavily involved in the feedback sessions – it is important not to pressure the young people or allow adults to influence them with their own opinions (even if they don't think they are).

Be sure the young people attending have fun! In addition to getting the feedback you need, this is the most important outcome. When young people tell their friends about it you want them to be positive so that future events will be well attended.

05 Gathering responses

Ahead of the event, consider the best ways to gather information from the young people attending. What specific methods are to be used to collect information? Be sure you have sufficient resources and space to run the event and any feedback sessions or opinion games.

Be sure that feedback from young people is recorded to refer to later on and present to other adults who may not be attending the event. This may be written down, by adults or by young people themselves, or recorded on audio or video.

06 Analysing responses

After the event itself, you will need to analyse the information you have gathered from the young people. This should be done relatively quickly to let young people see that their feedback is being acted upon and not forgotten about.

Who should review the responses from the young people? This will depend on the topics covered, but may be a group of adults or young people, maybe even the group of young people who were involved in the organising of the main feedback event.

07 Acting on responses and feedback

When the information has been reviewed and analysed, it should be fed back to the relevant group (be it at |Group, District or Regional level, and may be an existing committee).

If a presentation to a committee or group of adults is required it would be good to have some of the young people from your event attend. This allows them to present their own opinions rather than through a third party. This may be a presentation by a small core group of young people.

Once the information has been presented, it is important to agree the actions that will be taken based on the opinions of young people. Be sure that the young people who attended the event know what actions will be taken. This demonstrates to them that their opinions and feedback are being considered and is contributing towards making a real change to how Scouting operates in their local area.

Closing this loop is critical to helping young people understanding the youth involvement process and will reassure them that when their opinion is asked in the future that their comments will be taken seriously.

08 Planning the next event

Once your first event has gone well, start thinking about the next event to get more information and feedback from young people. Scouting has an ambition to ensure young people are at the heart of the decision-making process so the youth involvement system should never end. Rather than a new event on a new topic, there may be a second phase to the topics covered in the event you have just completed.

It may be that one of the feedback bases at your event is asking young people on what other areas they would like to be involved, and this could provide ideas for your next event. You may also be able to recruit young people from your first event to plan, organise and run subsequent events.

09 Top tips

- Don't call it a "forum" – choose a title or name that will be exciting and engaging for the young people.
- Discuss any forum with the DC and ADC's in advance and get their support. It is essential that you have the support of your District in terms of recruiting young people and ensuring that the outcomes are put to use.
- Include activities and games. Try not to run the sessions as a "meeting" otherwise young people will not come back.
- Have young people help organise and publicise the event. This will encourage more people to attend as peer selling and promotion is more effective than from adults.
- Try to visit the young people during your recruiting. There is a much greater chance that you will be able to interest them in what you are going to say if you visit them, rather than relying on them taking the first step.
- Be sure not to talk down to young people. They will engage much more if their opinions are being taken on board and they know they are being listened to.
- Consider what to ask them. Be sure topics are of interest and that young people will have an opinion on them.
- Give the young people a chance to express their views on topics other than those set, to let them feedback on other aspects of their Scouting that may be of value.
- Make it clear how you will use the feedback gained at the session. This lets the young people know what to expect after the event and that you are taking things seriously.
- Outcomes and recommendations must be acted on. If the Group/District/Region does not consider and act on outcomes from the forum, the young people will become disillusioned.
- Provide feedback to those who attended on how their information will be used.
- Start with a small team, ideally not all from the same Group/Unit. It is generally easier to recruit from groups with whom somebody in the team has links, so use this to your advantage and increase the potential number of links to the team.
- Do not worry if you have a small number of participants! Depending on the outcomes, a youth involvement event can be very difficult to run with large numbers. A representative, or two, from each Group may be perfectly adequate.