

# Notes for the parents/carers of a young person under suspension

## Action taken by the Association

Please be reassured that suspending a youth member is not a decision that is easy or taken lightly in any way. The decision has been taken after careful consideration and by the Lead Volunteer with advice from the Safeguarding Team at UK Headquarters.

A suspension is a neutral act and does not mean that Scouts have decided that the allegation is true, or that guilt is established. Suspension is intended to ensure that no situation can arise that may cause further concern - and allows a period where further information may be received and, if appropriate, the statutory agencies (typically the Police or Social Services) may carry out their duties.

Under the rules of The Scout Association, a youth member may be suspended if it is alleged that they have committed a serious criminal offence, or they are accused of actions or offences that have put adults or young people at serious risk of harm.

Whilst suspended, the young person should not participate in any activity connected with Scouting. They should not attend meetings or events of any kind and may not wear the uniform or badges.

It will usually be necessary to inform some adult leaders of the suspension, but these will be kept to the minimum that circumstances allow. The District Lead Volunteer will maintain an overview of who is informed, and to what extent confidentiality can, or should, be maintained.

## Support available from Scouting

We know that friendships between young people are a huge and central part of Scouts. During the suspension, social contact with Scouting friends is still possible unless it is likely to impact on an investigation or would subject them to unfair or undue pressure. Social contacts must not be used to circumvent the purposes of suspension, for example by attending Scout activities or entering Scout premises.



The District Lead Volunteer will appoint a liaison person to provide support and to act as a link to Scouting during the period of suspension. The liaison person will not be involved in any way with the allegation, or with any subsequent Scout investigation, and will not play any part in the process of suspension.

The liaison person should not be expected to enter into any legal, financial or personal commitment, for example bail, surety, binding over, or be involved in court proceedings and will not act as an “appropriate adult” (see below).

### Sources of legal advice

Where a suspension relates to a serious criminal or misconduct allegation, or relates to any serious harm to Scouting or to any person, the Scout Association recommends that suspended persons take independent legal advice at an early stage:

- You can obtain professional legal advice from a solicitor at your own expense at any time.
- Limited free legal advice is also available through the Citizens Advice Bureau or local law centres.
- If your child is questioned at a police station, they must be offered free legal advice, and can ask for this, usually from a duty solicitor, who will give them independent legal advice.
- If your child is under the age of 18, they must not be questioned without an ‘appropriate adult’ being present. The appropriate adult will normally be a parent/carer, however, in certain circumstances a social worker or an independent volunteer may fill that role.

The Scout Association cannot provide legal advice or representation to a suspended person.

### Ending a suspension

If there is statutory agency involvement in a case, the UK Headquarters Safe Scouting Team must wait until the conclusion of their involvement before starting an internal investigation. Experience has shown that any disciplinary, legal or judicial processes which may follow an allegation or concern can become drawn out over a long period of time. This means a timeline for any suspension cannot be provided. After statutory agency involvement is concluded, the Safeguarding Team may need to conduct further enquiries within Scouts, including gaining accounts of those involved, to inform a risk assessment.



Where a statutory agency such as the police or social services have been involved in the matter, advice will be sought from that agency.

Possible outcomes following a period of suspension include:

- Reinstatement
- Reinstatement with conditions

Examples of conditions might include the transfer to an alternative Group, Unit or Section, the provision of additional adult support or supervision, or exclusion from specific activities.

- Dismissal

The dismissal of a young person (whether following a suspension or not) will follow the rules of the Association regarding the dismissal of youth members.

