



Parent/carer conversation framework

This framework's designed to support initial conversations with parents or carers where a young person with additional needs or disabilities wishes to join Scouts.

Planning the conversation

Plan an appropriate place for the conversation take place. This should be a neutral and comfortable space, where you'll be able to talk without being interrupted. The conversation should involve the Leader and/or the District Commissioner, the parent or carer, and if appropriate, the young person themselves. It may also be helpful to involve someone in a local inclusion role or who has expertise in this area.

Before the meeting, you may want to speak to your line manager (eg Group Scout Leader or District Commissioner) and refer to our guidance at scouts.org.uk/diversity, so you feel prepared and confident.

During the conversation

- Make sure that the parent or carer feels like it's an informal conversation and not an interview. It's just the starting point of ongoing partnership.
 - Be honest about your level of knowledge and skills. You can explain that you're keen to learn from them, the parent or carer, as the expert on their child's needs.
 - Be positive but realistic. Help them understand what to expect from Scouts.
 - Take the lead from the parent or carer in the words they use to describe their child's additional needs or disability.
 - Remember that each young person will be different, so avoid making any assumptions.
 - Explain to the parent or carer how you plan to store and share any information you record, and make sure that they're happy with this.
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Starting the conversation

Start the conversation with some simple introductory questions, which will also start to give you an insight into the young person. Example questions: How are you hoping your child will benefit from joining Scouts? What does your child want to get out of Scouts? Does your child already know anyone attending our Group?

Give an introduction to Scouts and to your Group or section. Within this, or throughout the conversation, explain:

- Scouts is run by adult volunteers.

- Scouts is all about supporting young people's development, through fun and adventure.
- Scouts is inclusive and we do our best to support the full participation of all young people. There's a lot of flexibility within Scouts to meet individual needs.
- What the programme and activities are like. (Giving the parent or carer insight into the programme, and a sense of what a typical section meeting looks like, will help them give you the most relevant information about their child's needs).
- We aim to work closely in partnership with the parent or carer to plan how to best support the young person.

The conversation

Example topics and questions are provided below, to help identify the young person's individual needs and plan support strategies or adaptations to support their access to Scouts.

Start by explaining that you'd like to ask some questions to help you understand their child's needs, and work with them to plan any reasonable adjustments so they can enjoy Scouts.

You can also reassure the parent or carer that any information you record will be processed and retained in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. It'll be used for Scouts purposes only and will be kept securely.

Additional needs

Example questions: Does your child have a diagnosed additional need or disability? Does your child attend a mainstream or a Special Educational Needs (SEN) school? Do they receive any extra support or supervision at school? Does [name] have a 'Statement of Special Educational Needs' or 'Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)'?

Interests and strengths

This is important to keep the conversation positive and focused on the unique needs of the new member. This may also support you in getting to know the young person and helping them settle into the section and make friends.

Example questions: *What does your child particularly enjoy? Do they have any special interests? What are their strengths?*

Difficulties and support strategies

It's important to think ahead and anticipate any particular difficulties a young person may have in Scouts. This will help you plan an inclusive programme and activities, and also consider any potential adaptations needed to the meeting place.

Asking about how the young person communicates and their level of understanding is particularly useful, in terms of planning how instructions are given. It's also important to find out about any challenging behaviours and their usual triggers or causes, along with support strategies.

Giving the parent or carer some information about the meeting place, the types of activities involved in your programme, and what a typical meeting looks like, will help them anticipate any difficulties and give you the most relevant information.

■ **Difficulties** - Example questions: Is there anything about Scouts that you think they might find difficult? Do they have any particular dislikes or fears?

■ **Communication** - Example questions: Does your child need any support with communicating or understanding instructions?

■ **Behaviour** – Example questions: Does your child have any difficulties with their behaviour? Do they need any support in managing their behaviour? Are there any known causes/triggers for the behaviour at home or school?

■ **Support** – Example questions: What can we do to help manage these difficulties? How do you think we could best support your child in Scouts? What works well at home or school? Does [name] get extra support at school – please can you tell me about it? Is there any paperwork (support plans, etc) used at school that you might be able to share with us? What would you advise we do if...?

Safety

This is important to identify any particular activities in the programme that might be of high risk to the young person, so you can plan measures to support them as part of your risk assessments. It may be that you need the parent or carer to attend some activities to provide additional support (eg nights away).

Note: If a young person requires regular one-to-one supervision at all times in Scouts, the Group isn't obliged to provide this. The parent, carer or a professional carer may need to attend to support the young person. At all times in Scouts, all adults follow the Young People First Code of Behaviour (Yellow Card).

Example questions: Do you have any concerns about your child's safety at Scouts? Is [name] likely to wander/run off?

Nights away

Explain that sleepovers or camps will be part of the programme, and identify any additional support that is needed. Example questions: Does [name] ever spend time away from home overnight? How comfortable are you with the idea of overnight experiences?

Medical and diet

Example questions: Does your child have any medical needs or take any medication? Is your child independent with their personal care/toileting? Is your child on a special diet, or do they have any allergies or intolerances? Are there any foods that should be avoided?

Note: If a young person requires personal care (eg support with going to the toilet or with eating), this must be provided by the parent or carer.

Anything else?

Ask the parent or carer if there's anything else they feel you need to know.

Closing the conversation

Next steps – You could ask if the parent or carer would like you to arrange a pre-visit to the section or to the meeting place, for themselves and their child. It's also worth asking if they'd like to attend the first meeting alongside their child.

Staying in touch – Find out the best contact details to contact the parent or carer during a meeting, and the best time and method to contact them to discuss how their child's getting on at Scouts. Explain who the parent should contact if they have any questions/problems, and how.

Review - Agree when you'll discuss how things are going (bi-monthly). Be honest and open with the parent or carer. It may be appropriate to explain here that there can be situations where a Group doesn't have the capacity or resources to meet the needs of a young person, and in which case the District Commissioner would seek to find an alternative Group for their child. Finish by checking if there are any other questions they want to ask, or any concerns.

After the conversation

Remember, this conversation will just be the start of ongoing partnership with the parent or carer.

Keep in touch with the parent or carer. You may also wish to share a copy of your notes after meeting, to make sure you both understand each other. As with any young person when they join Scouts, take time to get to know the young person as an individual. Check in with them at an appropriate time to find out anything they're finding difficult and anything you can do to help.

For further support

Remember you're not alone and you're not expected to be an expert. Your line manager's there to support you, and sometimes just getting a different perspective on a situation can be really valuable. Information and guidance is available via scouts.org.uk/diversity.

For any further support, please contact the Scout Information Centre via phone or email to info.centre@scouts.org.uk.