

# Handout 7: Keeping Scouting Good

## Safe Scouting within the District

An important function of the District is to ensure that Groups and Explorer Scout Units provide good Scouting for young people. Many of us instinctively know what a good Section feels like. There are many items that could be cited, but it is likely to have a friendly atmosphere for young people and adults, an active and engaging programme, a supportive environment for young people where inappropriate behaviour such as bullying is properly dealt with and effective support from the relevant Executive Committee.

If Commissioners are aware of Groups that fall short, it is very important that the issues are addressed as they could mask inappropriate behaviour. It has become clear that isolated Groups are those in which children might experience a poor quality programme or be at risk of harm.

## What's in it for District Commissioners?

If we have great and safe Scouting then there will be fewer issues that take time to address. Experience shows us that great Scouting means that there are fewer complaints and happier volunteers – all good things to allow the District Commissioner time to work on other important items such as growing Scouting. Also important is that addressing these issues will make it easier to ensure that young people are safe.

## Key issues to look for:

Groups and Sections that:

- have an individual with overwhelming control over everything that suffocates other volunteers
- allow people to help without carrying out the relevant checks
- allow or encourage rule breaking (even low level items)
- have a reputation for inappropriate topics of discussion or actions
- isolate adult volunteers from one another
- don't follow policies such as offering Scouting to both boys and girls
- are often or always "off the radar" and not in contact with anyone outside the Group
- consistently fail to provide necessary information such as the annual accounts
- have a low level of adult training attainment
- do not follow the badge and award schemes or award very few badges
- do not hold leaders' meetings
- send no-one to District meetings even when they are useful
- do not join-in with District activities even when they are good
- spurn help even when it is clear that it is needed

- have consistently small sections each year even when there are available young people
- are unfairly dismissive of District activities and personnel

### What to do...

Key here is that we must provide support to Groups and Units and tackle issues, but it can't all happen at once. Chose the top two or three actions and get those done before taking another look.

- discuss issues with your County Commissioner or other District Commissioners to see what they have done and share good ideas (do not be alone!)
- meet Group Scout Leaders and District Explorer Scout Commissioners one-to-one and draw attention to issues and the risks
- ensure the support team (Assistant District Commissioners and others) meet and share experiences to help the District Commissioner to understand what is happening across the District
- create a support plan for each Group and Unit and ensure it is carried out
- ensure adults have completed all relevant checks (including a current valid disclosure)
- ensure that Assistant District Commissioners and others regularly visit Sections (even those where they are not made to feel welcome!) and provide feedback
- regularly discuss safety and safeguarding at District meetings
- ensure training is carried out by Group Scout Leaders and Explorer Scout Commissioners
- ensure that the right people are in the right roles
- consider undertaking an appointment review