YOUR VIRTUAL INDUCTION
GSL SUPPORT

session 2: the executive, the AGM and you
INTRODUCTION
Welcome to session two of Your Virtual Induction. This session will take you through how an Executive Committee should be structured and what it should be doing. It also gives you some ideas for livening up your Annual General Meeting (AGM) and tips on how to make sure that you do everything during the business part that you should do. There are also some ideas for increasing parent and community participation and creating opportunities for adult recruitment. We will also cover how to chair a meeting effectively and what should be put on the agenda.

As always there is a list of useful documents and where to find them. It would be a good idea to share parts or all of this session with your Group Chairman, depending on how good your working relationship is.

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
It is important that before we look at what an Executive Committee does, we must understand how it is made up. Session six (The Small Print) takes you through how an Executive Committee is structured – you could look at this now if you wish. Work through the document and fill in the boxes. This should help you understand how you set up the Executive Committee and how they should then be supporting you.

WHAT DOES THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE DO?

The legal bit
First and foremost, members of the Executive Committee are trustees of the Scout Group. This is an important part of the role and all Executive members should be made aware of this. Charity trustees are responsible for ensuring that the business of the charity is carried out according to its own rules and within the rules of The Charities Commission (in Scotland the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR)). Trustees can, in some circumstances, be liable for any financial losses incurred by the charity and must therefore consider their decisions carefully. However, as long as the trustees act reasonably, work within the governing document (in our case Policy, Organisation and Rules) and take proper and appropriate advice when required to do so either by law or on occasions when additional advice is needed, then they are very unlikely to be held liable. The Scout Association provides automatic cover to insure all Scout trustees across the UK against such liability: it’s called ‘Trustee Indemnity Insurance’. Speak to Unity Insurance for further advice. Charity law in Scotland is different to England and Wales. Refer to SHQ/Scottish Variations from POR for the most up to date regulations.

Unity (Scout Insurance Services) – www.unityins.co.uk

The responsibilities
So along with acting as trustees, what else is the Executive Committee there for? According to POR, the Executive Committee ‘exists to support the Group Scout Leader in meeting the responsibilities of their appointment’. The Executive Committee and you are both responsible for the satisfactory management of the Group. The Executive is not only concerned with the administration of the Group, but also with how the Group is regarded in public and ensuring that there are sufficient leaders to run the sections and that these adults are supported in their roles.
Meetings

It is very important to clearly define the difference between matters discussed by leaders and matters discussed by the Executive Committee. Whether the Cub Scouts should have orange or lemon squash at the Cub Scout fun day is really a matter for leaders, whereas whether there is enough cash in the budget for refreshments is a decision for the Executive Committee. The ability of the Group Chairman to chair the meeting effectively is key. They need to understand their role and place within the Group and they need to be able to keep the meeting in order.

Work through the Chair’s Self Test document with the Group Chairman, it gives some tips and ideas of how to run meetings effectively. Here are some more:

- The GSL and Group Chairman should prepare the agenda in consultation.
- When preparing the agenda the previous minutes should be consulted for items to be followed up under the agenda point ‘Matters arising from the last minutes’. Major discussion points should have their own place on the agenda.
- Minutes should be taken and kept as an accurate record of what has been discussed. This is how the Executive Committee shows that it has acted in accordance with POR and in satisfying its duty as trustees, avoiding any complications with liability claims.
- Make sure that the minutes are circulated quickly after the meeting, with names against action points. This will enable people to carry out their agreed action before the next meeting. If you are only sending out the minutes with the next agenda, chances are that people may have forgotten that they agreed to do it, they will then send their apologies to the meeting rather than turning up and admitting that they had forgotten. That is a meeting wasted.
- People volunteer their time and it is important not to waste it. Start the meeting on time. Stick to the point. Do not allow one person’s opinion to dominate the meeting and finish at the time previously agreed. You will find that people are more likely to volunteer if they know that all meetings are finished in two hours or under.
- If necessary, hold a separate meeting to discuss specific projects or topics.
- Circulating the year’s meeting dates in advance means that space is allocated in the diaries of very busy people. Do not cancel a meeting unless you really have to and if you do, give people as much notice as possible. However, don’t have a meeting if there is nothing to discuss.
- Sometimes there will be uncomfortable discussions that happen or need to happen. By having a neutral meeting place it means that everyone can come and go and not have to live with memories of a bad meeting in their living room. Use the Group’s meeting place or find a local venue that is prepared to donate a function room once or twice a term. Be careful though; trustee and business matters should not be discussed in the lounge bar of the local pub. These are confidential matters that should not be discussed in such a way. You could always adjourn there afterwards.

Chair’s self test

You can find this in the Additional Resources section of www.scouts.org.uk/gslsupport

What the rules say

POR (Chapter 3 Rule 3.23 b i ) clearly defines what the Executive Committee is responsible for. That is:

- the maintenance of the Group's property and equipment
- the raising of funds and the administration of the Group’s finance
- the insurance of persons, property and equipment
- Group public occasions
- assisting with the recruitment of leaders and other adult support.

When discussing matters the Executive should consider whether it falls into one of these categories.
Who should we ask?

When creating an Executive Committee we should firstly consider the roles and expertise we require. It is important to have a mixture of age and experience and ideally, every section of the Group should be represented by a parent or interested party, not just the Section Leader.

Each of the main roles will need someone with slightly different key skills. Understanding this and what each role needs is key to building an effective Executive Committee that will support you in the running of the Group.

Group Chairman

The overriding thing that a good Chairman needs to be is organised. They need to be able to give the role the time that it needs, and that isn’t just five or six meetings per year despite how we try to sell it to them. They will need to be an excellent time and people manager. Keeping control of the Executive meetings will require both of these skills. They will need to be an effective communicator; dealing with other Executive members as well as people outside the Group, ie District Chairman and members of the community. They will need to be keen and enthusiastic, a leader by example and someone with whom you can work alongside, otherwise it will be a long year!

Group Secretary

As you may imagine, administration skills are important for the role of Secretary. An ability to keep records up to date and complete the census return usually forms part of the role. They will also need to be able to take meaningful notes of the Executive meetings and AGM. This is quite important when it comes to the submission of accounts and reports to the Charity Commission (Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator in Scotland). It wants to see evidence through these reports as to how monies have been spent. Good written and verbal communication skills are also important, as the Secretary is often the first point of contact parents and members of the public have with the Group.

Group Treasurer

Anyone who usually works in a financial environment, with figures, money, book keeping or wages will have the skills to be a Group Treasurer, as well as anyone who runs a business or charity. The format in which the accounts need to be presented is possibly the most challenging part of the role, but there is plenty of support available to help with that. Much of the role is around the receiving and allocating of funds and accounting for them. There is a degree of budget setting and observance and they must be able to communicate with others. They don’t necessarily have to be a very active part of the Group, just keeping the accounts could be the only thing they do. Think about approaching a local accountancy firm to see if someone would like to volunteer

FS330037: Role Description for a Group Chairman
FS330077: The Group Executive
BS310022: A Guide for the Group Chairman

FS 330064: Role Description for a Group Secretary
BS310020: A Guide for the Group Secretary

FS330065: Role Description for a Group Treasurer
BS310021: Supporting the Group Treasurer
Other supporters

There are many other roles within the Group that can be carried out by an Executive member, thus freeing up the time of the leaders to do what they are good at – running their sections. Obviously the more people you can get involved in doing smaller jobs, the more will get done. People are more likely to volunteer to do one small task for a set period rather than giving up their life for the next twenty years.

Some ideas:

**Sub-Committee chairman**
You will probably have a fundraising committee. A separate team for this will be a huge weight lifted from the leaders and having a separate chairman will ensure that they are organised and focused. You may have other sub-committees for purposes such as a new headquarters project, celebratory Group camp, gang show, organising a family social evening. You can form and dissolve them as necessary.

**Quartermaster**
Have you got any active grandparents who could perhaps fulfil this role for you? The Group Secretary is responsible for keeping the inventory up to date and ensuring adequate insurance, but having someone to deal with the day-to-day upkeep, repair and booking in and out of equipment will free up the leaders’ time.

**Press and publicity**
Local media and press publicity can be very influential for members of the public. The best way to generate positive coverage for your Scout Group is to contact your County Media Development Manager (MDM) who will be happy to help you. This relationship could be specifically managed by one designated person.

**Magazine/newsletter/website manager**
With modern technology any of these options would be fine. It is important to try to get the best finish we possibly can. The days of wonky photocopied typewritten pages are over. If we want to attract volunteers and funding we have to look good. The Scout Association has a brand centre which can be used to create on-brand materials. See [www.scouts.org.uk/brand](http://www.scouts.org.uk/brand)

**Headquarters manager**
Another active grandparent with a fair knowledge of DIY would fulfil this role easily. A bit of a handyman who can change light bulbs and perhaps be around during the day to grant access to workmen if any works need doing. Just keeping the place in good shape. They could also be responsible for bookings, cleaning and grounds maintenance, but this is an example of where we can break roles down to more manageable tasks.

**Transport manager**
Have you got a minibus? If so, someone to keep on top of the maintenance and care of it would be very useful. Is there a garage locally that would store it and maintain it for you? Have you asked them?

Supporters of the Group don’t all need to be on the Executive Committee but they could be. Roles can be broken down and rewritten according to the skills of the person who has been asked to do it. Don’t be afraid to change things around; don’t carry on with a system that isn’t working just because that is what you have always done.
THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Why is it that the thought of the AGM fills many of us with dread? It doesn’t have to be like that. With ample planning and some thought we can use the AGM as a great PR exercise and social activity as well as complying with the legal requirements. Use these tips to help.

Set the date

Get the date in the diary well in advance and publicise it well. Think about when you are having it. It has to be within six months of the end of financial year depending on when yours is. With a March year end, would a mid-September AGM be a great welcome back for the term? If the year end is December how about a late May barbecue or family camp with the AGM thrown in? Set the date to suit you; don’t be afraid to change it.

Invitations

Notify the District and County, they may like to send someone along. As soon as the date is set, invite local officials, the Mayor (Provost in Scotland), local councillors and the MP/MSP/MLA/AM. Have you got any celebrities living locally? They may get hundreds of invitations to things, but they may just turn up if you ask them. Nearer the time formally invite the Group Scout Council. How about running a competition within the Group to design the invitation? There are probably older Scouts or Explorers who would do a great job of getting something printable for you from the efforts of the younger members. Do any of your sections meet in a school? Invite the Head Teacher and the caretaker; they will be the ones tidying up after you! The local faith leaders and head of other youth groups may be good people to invite, telling the community about the good activities you are doing is an important aspect of the AGM.

Share it out

Think about the logistics of the evening. Is the access to your headquarters obvious? Often we are tucked round the back of buildings, down footpaths. Whether you are or not, get a couple of people wearing uniform to greet and direct visitors and not sullen Scouts who would rather not. Use people who are keen and enthusiastic, a couple of bouncing Beavers with the appropriate adult supervision would set a great example. Make sure that you have asked someone to provide refreshments and discuss in advance what that will be. Cheese and wine or tea and biscuits? Make sure that there will be plenty of people there before and after to get the chairs out and tidy up afterwards. Share out the responsibilities otherwise you may find that you are trying to do it all.

Format and agenda

There is nothing to say that this has to be a very formal evening. Some of the most successful AGMs are held at camps and barbecues. Make sure that you have enough time though to get through the formal part of the meeting. There are some AGM ideas at the end of this section as well as a possible template for an agenda.

Administration

Make sure that you have the minutes from last year’s meeting and enough copies as well as the agenda to give out. You will also need an Annual Report and Accounts pack. This is the requirement to satisfy the Charity Commission2 that we are administering our charity’s money wisely. You will need signed copies for the District, County, HQ and Charity Commissioners. Have extra copies of the report to hand out and leave locally. How about putting a copy in the doctors’ waiting room, the library, the hairdressers, local churches and schools?

On the night

Reserve seats at the front for the VIPs. Make sure that everything you need is to hand. Are you presenting prizes or thank you gifts? Are there any long service awards to present?
Formal matters

Make sure that the formal parts of the meeting are carried out, and minuted accurately. Follow the agenda. And then relax.

Setting the scene

Why not run a video or slideshow of photos as people are arriving? This will give you a chance to welcome people as they arrive, give them a chance to have a read of the report and see what their young people have been up to over the last year. You would need a laptop, data projector and screen to do this. You may find that someone within the Group has access to this sort of equipment, or ask your District or County if you can borrow theirs. A professional start looks good. District and County may already have DVDs that have been prepared for other events (it’s worth asking). Plan B, make sure that you have covered all eventualities in your planning. Have a contingency plan in case guest speakers are unable to make it at the last minute. Short and sweet, keep the meeting part as short as possible and the social part as long as you need. Make the event a social and sociable one. Make sure that all leaders are present and circulating to chat with parents and VIPs.

SAMPLE AGENDA FOR A GROUP AGM

Before start: DVD of year’s highlights (photos and video)

Key business
1. Introduction from the Chair of the meeting (Group President or Chairman). Introduce key people, don’t assume everyone knows everyone. Housekeeping arrangements.
2. Agree minutes of previous AGM.
3. Apologies for absence.
4. Receive and adopt the Annual Report for the previous financial year (just ended).
5. Receive and adopt the Financial Statements for the previous financial year (just ended).

Elections and appointments
6. Reappoint or elect key appointments in the Group Scout Council (Presidents, Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, etc).
7. Appoint the Independent Examiner for the coming year.
8. Elect and/or co-opt members to the Executive Committee.

Extras (where applicable)
9. Elect representatives to external organisations.
10. Presentation of awards.
11. Guest Speaker.

Conclusion
12. Vote of thanks.
13. Close of meeting.

Social event
SOME IDEAS FOR AGMS WITH A DIFFERENCE

Include the young people
A short presentation by Beavers, Cubs or Scouts is a good thing to include, but keep it short. Don’t allow every Beaver, Cub and Scout to do something; otherwise you will be verging on boring the audience.

Prizes
Everyone likes to see their son or daughter receive a prize. Approach a local business for a small amount of money to sponsor your annual Group Awards. Think up some snazzy titles or topics for them: most activity badges earned; most nights away in the year; best attendance; most cakes baked. The only limit is your imagination.

Family competition
Hold the AGM before, during or after a quiz night, beetle drive, rounders match, sports day or race evening. Just make sure that there is adequate time to do both.

Barbecue or party
Invite everyone to a social event and throw in the AGM for good measure.

Family camp
Not only is family camp a great adult recruitment tool, you could always slip the AGM in on Sunday morning after breakfast. Everyone has had such a great weekend, they may just volunteer.

Guest speaker
Invite a really inspirational speaker who people would be interested to come and hear.

Ask around
There may be other Groups in your District and County who already have an AGM with a difference. You may be one of those Groups. If so, share the information of what works for you. Ask for an agenda point to be raised at the next District GSLs meeting to share information.
NOTES

1 Although in some parts of the British Isles, Scout Counties are known as Areas or Islands – and in one case Bailiwick – for ease of reading this resource simply refers to County/Counties. In Scotland there is no direct equivalent to County or Area. In Scotland Scouting is organised into Districts and Regions, each with distinct responsibilities. Some County functions are the responsibility of Scottish Regions, whilst others lie with Scottish Districts. The focus of responsibility is outlined in Scottish Variations from POR.

2 References to Charity Commission/Commissioners apply to England and Wales only. For requirements in Scotland/ Northern Ireland refer to the respective Country Headquarters.

FURTHER SUPPORT
Support is always available from the Scout Information Centre; they can be contacted by phone, email or by post:

t: 0845 300 1818
e: info.centre@scouts.org.uk
p: The Information Centre
   Gilwell Park
   Chingford
   London
   E4 7QW

For insurance enquiries, please contact Unity Insurance Services at www.unityins.co.uk

Support is also available from the Regional Development Service (England), who can be contacted through the Information Centre or by email:
e: rds@scouts.org.uk

In Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales contact the Country Headquarters at:
e: info@scoutsni.com
e: shq@scouts-scotland.org.uk
e: admin@scoutswales.org.uk

www.scouts.org.uk/gslsupport