

# USING CAMPS TO RECRUIT PARENTS:

A guide



# INTRODUCTION

**You don't need convincing how wonderful Scouting is, and how offering it to more people is a good idea. If you need more adult volunteers, then using camps to involve parents should be an integral part of the recruitment process.**

**The most common plea from the leaders we talk to is that they need more adults to help run scout groups. But many leaders don't have the confidence to ask. Use this guide to learn how.**

## Five reasons to involve parents in your camp

1. **It's all about recruitment** – Get your head switched on to the fact that by inviting and involving parents you could recruit more adult volunteers for your group, or at least get more commitment from the adults who currently help.
2. **It works** – Camps and residential experiences are proven to be the most successful method of recruiting parents to help more in their children's scout group. At an average camp, eight parents will get involved in Scouting for the first time as an adult.
3. **The numbers don't lie** – Forty-five per cent of new section leaders come from parents of existing or prospective youth members. Fact. Targeting parents is the most effective way to focus your recruitment energies.
4. **Camping is fun** – Much of the best work you do as a scout volunteer happens at camp, so there's no better place to show off the special formula of fun and friendship that Scouting provides. Parents who've attended camps tell us they most look forward to enjoying themselves and camping.
5. **It's recommended** – Ninety-eight per cent of scout groups that have used camps to recruit parents say that they will do it again.

## Step by step

Use the plan contained in the next few pages of this guide to go through the stages and you will recruit parents to give greater support to your scout group. There are three stages: before, at and after camp. There are also plenty of resources to help you with 'the ask' which apply to different stages of the process.

# BEFORE CAMP

## Inviting parents along

A successful recruitment drive at camp starts with you, and how much you put into the planning phase. There are three types of parents you can invite to your camp:

- Those on the parent rota
- The wider pool
- The 'veterans'

### Parents on the rota

Go through the list of parents who occasionally help with your section. What do they enjoy? What would they be good at? What defined role can you give them at camp? Parents who are already engaged with the group are prime targets for converting into sectional assistants.

### About the sectional assistant role

Sectional assistants have roles which can be tailored to the demands of the scout group according to the role description. They are flexible roles but committed additions to the adult volunteer team. Sectional assistants are members or associate members of The Scout Association giving them access to benefits like Scouting magazine, Scouting Plus, a higher level of insurance coverage and training to support them in their role. They also accrue service for their role in Scouting.

If you don't have a parent rota, why not start one? See [www.scouts.org.uk/documents/ParentsRota.pdf](http://www.scouts.org.uk/documents/ParentsRota.pdf)

### The wider pool

Think about all parents of young people in your section or group. You may not know much about some of them, but this is your chance to find out more. Start spending some time at the beginning and end of meetings talking to the parents. The ones who haven't helped before are your target candidates to get helping on the camp for the first time. Try to find out the following to build up a picture of them so you can tailor the invitation:

- Their skills
- What time they have available
- What they are interested in and motivated by
- Their previous scouting experience.

Use the information you gather to determine which parents you really want on your camp. You'll have a good picture of their interests, skills and characteristics, so tailor your invitation carefully. After the camp you'll be asking them to help occasionally, maybe by agreeing to go on the parent rota. And you'll definitely want them to sign up for the next camp you're planning.

**Tip:** Ask assistant leaders to start and end the meeting so that you have time to speak to parents. If parents are usually keen to drop off/pick up their children, start inviting them in for the end of the meeting.

### The 'veterans'

If you've run a Big Adventure, or involved parents at camp before, think about the parents who helped out the last time.

- Did they enjoy it?
- Where are they now?
- Has anything changed since their last involvement?
- Are they helping the group in some way?
- Have you invited them all to this year's camp?

You can download posters, flyers and invitations for your camp from the Big Adventure area of the print centre. See [www.scouts.org.uk/brand](http://www.scouts.org.uk/brand).

## The wow meeting

Once you've invited these parents to your camp, it's a good idea to bring them together to tell them more about it.

### Before the meeting

Think about what will need to be done in order to ensure the residential experience runs smoothly, so you know what support you are looking for. This might be help with cooking, activities, supervision, finance, administration, first aid or transport of equipment.

Send parents an invitation to a wow meeting.

### At the meeting

This is a chance to wow the parents so that they cannot resist getting involved. Consider showing a video of last year's event (Tip: Scouts or young leaders may be able to do this better than you). If you didn't take photos or shoot video, worry not. You can get a promotional film for The Big Adventure from the Scouts TV YouTube channel, or use

the Think You Know Scouting? video.

See [www.scouts.org.uk/tv](http://www.scouts.org.uk/tv)

These parents are the potential future leaders of your group, don't be afraid to show them how much fun they are likely to have by coming to camp. Arrange the meeting in a way that highlights all the group's best features. Your aim is to get two or three parents willing to help with the organisation, planning and delivery of the camp.

Provide refreshments, use an appropriate venue and create a welcoming atmosphere. Consider starting with an activity that creates a positive atmosphere, such as toasting marshmallows. This may even evoke some childhood memories from the parents in attendance.

Remember, this is about recruitment. So creating a good impression is vital.

Checklist for your wow meeting at page 7

Sample information form at page 8

### Things to remember

- Make it clear that any commitment is fantastic and can fit in with their availability and their interests. Reassure parents that they won't be expected to do more than they agree to.
- Any parent helping for the first time who intends to stay overnight at camp or help with money must fill out an occasional helper (OH) form which includes a criminal records check. This could take a month to process, so make sure you get it done in plenty of time.
- Give everyone a chance to air their views. There will be vocal parents who want to do it all, but make sure you have time for those parents who have ideas but don't shout about them.
- People on the edge of Scouting, like parents, are much more likely to help at camp if asked, so make sure you have a plan for doing this (see The Ask)
- However you're planning to cover the cost of the camp (every group does this differently) make sure it's clearly communicated at an early stage, possibly at the wow meeting. This will save an embarrassing conversation later.
- Familiarise all adults who are attending with the child protection policy and give them a copy of the yellow card.

## Part of the team

Parents who've come into Scouting through helping at camp tell us that a crucial part of their decision is that they felt involved in the preparation for camp, and confident during it.

If you're holding planning meetings for camp, invite all the parents to these. Listen to their ideas and be prepared to let go of some of yours. This camp is about recruitment at heart, and by letting new parents share in the planning you can help them feel fully involved and part of the team.

Tip: Avoid using Scouting jargon during the planning for camp. Abbreviations like GSL and unfamiliar words like woggle can alienate newcomers. If parents are keen to learn, you can print off a list of Scouting terms at [scouts.org.uk/parents](https://scouts.org.uk/parents)

### Defined roles

Parents are most likely to enjoy camp and volunteer again if you give them a defined role at the camp, based on their skills and interests.

There are many things that need doing at camp, as well as before.

### Preparation roles

- First aider
- Treasurer
- Bookings
- Logistics
- Shopping

### Camp roles

- Cook
- First aider
- Fire/woodpile
- Activities
- Patrol/six supervisor
- Photographer
- Logistics of young people and kit
- Set up/clean up.

Ask your parent volunteers what they'd like to do. They might have ideas not covered here that are even better.

It's your responsibility to make sure everyone knows what their role is and what they are responsible for before you get to camp. This is really important as it will help parents

to feel useful during the camp, and give you a starting point for when you do the follow up.

## Preparation and checklist

We don't need to tell you how to organise a camp – you're already an expert. You could use your existing cub camp, summer camp, bank holiday event or beaver sleepover, but invite parents to be part of the team. Or you could organise an extra camp. It's up to you how you choose to do it.

### Are you ready?

Here's a list of what you need to cover before you pack the trailer and head for camp. They don't necessarily need to be done in this order, and some will need doing well in advance of the camp.

- Go over the safeguarding procedures again and check all adults are clear about the Young People First code of good practice.
- Remember: Parents intending to stay overnight at the camp must fill out an occasional helper (OH) form which includes a criminal records check.
- Insurance: Are all volunteers at your camp covered? Additional cover for occasional helpers can be arranged through Unity (Scout Insurance Services). Your district may have taken out extra cover on behalf of the scout group, so check with them also.
- Rules: Make sure everyone is clear about the rules of the camp. You could decide these at a planning meeting, so parents can have some input.
- Kit and equipment: Give all the adults a kit and equipment list, and be on hand to help with anything they don't have. It's a good idea to suggest they bring a folding chair so they can sit around the campfire.

### What's different?

There are a few important differences to the camp experience when you've got parents on board:

- You'll have a bigger team. Make the most of it.
- You need to let go. Don't fall into the trap of doing it all yourself. You're more likely to recruit parents if you give them a defined role that they're comfortable with.
- You'll have more time. With parents actively involved, you'll have less to do. Use that time by spending it with your parent volunteers, engaging in small talk and enthusing them about the world of Scouting.

## AT CAMP

If you've got the planning stage right, there isn't much to worry about when the time for camp comes. Everyone will have a defined role, and should feel like they're going in with a clear idea of what they'll be doing.

### Is everyone happy?

With a larger team than normal potentially involved, it can be hard to keep track of everything and everybody.

You may like to assign each parent with a buddy; one of your leadership team who they can turn to if they have any questions. These may be questions about scouting skills, or how to work with challenging behaviour. Prepare your team to be available to the parents and as helpful as possible. This is a really important aspect of making this an effective recruitment event, and part of your duty to lead and manage both the camp and the team.

Another idea is to have one leader on the team whose sole role at camp is to look after all the new adults. This would be someone with good people skills, who is approachable and considerate. They can take the time to make sure all the parents are happy and fully involved in the camp.

**Note:** Difficulties with other adults is one of the main reasons people leave Scouting. Assign a leader to support all the new parents and make sure they all feel part of the team throughout the camp.

### The opening ceremony

Start the camp in a way that involves and introduces your parent volunteers. If you're planning to do a grand howl or other group tradition, make sure you teach it to the parents, so that they don't feel left out.

Other important things to do include giving everyone a name badge for at least the first day, so that people can get to know each other. It's a good idea to present all the parents with a group scarf at the start of camp so they feel welcomed, and the young people know to treat them as they would any other leader.

Introduce the young people to all the new adults, and if parents are responsible for a lodge, six or patrol help them get to know the members. Build some time into the programme for this.

### Is everyone involved?

Giving the parents a defined role should help them get started at camp, but things don't always turn out as you planned. Make sure you catch up with each of them during the camp, to check they are doing what they expected and confident in their role.

You may find that someone would prefer a different role and you need to move things around. There's no problem with that; be flexible and you'll retain their interest.

### Time to shine

Because your camp is all about recruitment, you need to remember you're on show. This doesn't mean being on your best behaviour, but it is important to be yourself, remain positive and enthusiastic and let your natural passion for Scouting do the talking.

Key things to remember:

- Be available to answer parents' questions
- Be yourself
- Be inclusive, and explain jargonistic terms that may confuse a new volunteer.

## AFTER CAMP

Flag down isn't the end of the adventure. If you're going to recruit more adults, it's where the fun begins.

### The power of thank you

A key part of any recruitment process is making your thank you message personal and prompt. You'll know best how to arrange this, but in the week after the camp make sure you make some gesture to thank the parents who were on your team.

This could be a card made by the young people, a gift, or a photograph of the parent enjoying the camp, signed by the leadership team and young people.

Saying thank you as the parents leave is a great start.

### Talk tactics

Get together with your core leadership team as soon as possible after camp. Go through the list of new parents who helped, and share your feedback on what they did,

what they enjoyed and where your leaders could see them volunteering in the future.

Use this information at the follow up, which should be carried out by the most appropriate person. This could be their buddy, you or another adult they got one well with. Talking tactics with your team will make the follow up more fruitful.

### **The follow up**

Within two months of your camp, arrange to meet one-to-one with each parent who helped. This is the hard bit.

Look back on the camp and reflect on their experience with them. Don't end the meeting until you've asked them what they would like to do next. It's good to have a role in mind, based on their skills and what they enjoyed at camp, but be flexible and listen to their ideas.

It's always tempting to focus on filling vacant roles, but it's important to remember that roles should be tailored to fit the individual rather than pushing them into an existing role. Look at the vacant role and think how you can most flexibly reallocate the tasks within it. It could be that two of the parents who helped at camp could carry out different parts of one vacant role.

### **What's next?**

It's good to have something in the offing that your engaged, enthused parents can sign up for. This could be another camp, a fundraising event, a social or an organised review meeting of the camp.

This is where you might need forms for parents to change role from an occasional helper to something else. The sectional assistant role can be tailored to the demands of the scout group according to the role description. It is a flexible role, but a committed addition to the adult volunteer team.

Don't forget that not all Scouting roles involve working with young people. Ensure new adults know about roles on the executive committee and the training team, as well as the occasional odd jobs that need doing.

You can also tell them about Adventure News, a monthly email aimed at parents of young people in Scouting, which

will give them information, news and offers.

[www.scouts.org.uk/subscribe](http://www.scouts.org.uk/subscribe)

## **THE ASK**

So you've put all this effort into organising a great camp for the young people in your scout group, and taken the step of inviting parents along. You've given them a defined role, a buddy and a scarf. Maybe even a badge. But it's all in vain if you don't do the difficult bit and ask them to volunteer for you in a more official way. Here are three scripts you can use:

Inviting parents along – script on page 9

Pick your moment - script on page 10

The follow up – script on page 11



# Checklist for your wow meeting

## 1. Prepare, prepare, prepare

By getting to know the parents associated with your group and sections, you will have a fair idea of what their interests and talents are. At the meeting, be clear about what you are asking for.

You are looking for:

- People to help with the planning, organisation and delivery of the residential experience.
- People to help with activity ideas, budgeting, administration, cooking, supervising young people, running activities, organising transport and looking after equipment.

Be clear but realistic about the time involved, eg three planning meetings and then the event itself, plus an evaluation meeting after the camp.

## 2. Remembrance of things past

Give the assembled audience a brief summary of previous residential experiences. Ask a couple of young people to help with this, and inspire the audience with their stories of camp. It will have more impact coming from a young person. Showing a video or slideshow set to music will create a positive atmosphere in your meeting.

## 3. The big reveal

Let the drum roll build as you unveil the location for your next camp. Share some photos, or if you can hook up to the internet, use Google Earth to zoom in to a map of the campsite. Tell the parents about some of the activities you'd like to run on the camp, and generally build the excitement about the day, even if it's somewhere people are already familiar with.

## 4. Get personal

Ask people to write down what they are interested in doing, giving them some options, but allowing them to think of their own. Think about how you will capture this information, for example on a specific information form ([see an example](#)). Ask existing leaders to engage with people in completing the form and ensure that the completed forms are put in a safe place. Ensure they record their name, telephone number and email address clearly so that you can contact them.

## 5. End on a high

Remember this is a wow meeting, so end it on a high, sending people away hungry for more. Thank everyone for attending and tell them that you will be in touch with those that have expressed an interest to invite them to the first planning meeting. Offer a chocolate or sweet as a thank you.

Consider putting your details on magnetic paper so they can keep them on the fridge and contact you with any questions.

## 6. Don't leave them hanging

Follow up after the wow meeting. Email or telephone those parents who expressed an interest in helping. Thank them for attending and for their interest in helping to organise the event. Arrange a date for another meeting, where you can allocate specific tasks and start planning with their input. Don't forget to ask them to complete an occasional helper form (or follow the equivalent procedure in Scotland – talk to your appointments secretary).

## I WANT TO HELP AT CAMP!

Our next camp is coming soon and we want to encourage parents to get involved so that the group has a brilliant time, and you do too.

Please let us know how you could support the camp while by ticking one or more of the boxes below:

- Helping look after a small group of scouts
- Helping run activities
- Helping with the planning of the camp
- Record keeping/finances (can be done from home)
- Helping on occasional outings at weekends
- Helping with transport/logistics
- First aid
- Taking photos
- Setting up/clearing away the camp

Please return this form to your child's leader.

Parent's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_



## Inviting parents along – script

Use this script as the basis for inviting individual parents along to the wow meeting about your camp. Use the information you've gathered about them during informal chats at the start and end of meetings.

**You: Hello Fiona.**

Fiona: Hiya.

**You: I just wondered if you would be coming to the wow meeting about our next camp?**

Fiona: What's a wow meeting?

**You: It's a chance to find out where we'll be going, the types of activities we'll be running and how you can get involved.**

Fiona: I'm not sure I'd be any use. I don't have any specific skills and I wouldn't like leading/instructing a group of children.

**You: Of course you'd be of use. There's a job for everyone and they don't all involve looking after the scouts. I hear you are a really good cook...**

Fiona: Well, I do really like cooking.

**You: Excellent, we need a cooks team for camp, since this allows other adults time to organise and run the activities with the young people and not have to worry about getting food ready as well.**

Fiona: I see, but I haven't cooked for lots of people at once; I wouldn't be able to do it on my own.

**You: Of course not; that's why we're hoping to have a team of people who are willing to work together. It really isn't that difficult and it can be lots of fun. Why don't you come along to the meeting and find out a little bit more.**

Fiona: Oh, alright then. I'll see you there.

## Pick your moment – script

During camp there's a ready-made moment perfect for floating the possibility of turning someone from parent to leader. When the young people are in their tents (sleeping may be wishful thinking) the adults gather around the fire to reflect on the day's activities. Now's your chance, when they're relaxed and content.

The conversation might go something like this:

**You: Good day, Bob?**

Bob: Magic day. I loved running the aerial runway. The cubs had a great time!

**You: They love it, don't they? And you were great, really enthusiastic when they were scared to go down. I saw you. You had a real knack for it.**

Bob: Oh, thanks... it was nothing really.

**You: So... do you think you'd like to help out again? We can always do with an extra pairs of hands.**

Bob: Erm...

**You: Don't worry, I'm not asking you to sign your life away. I know you're busy at work. But I'm sure we can find a way to get you more involved.**

Bob: It's just a case of time. I did really enjoy today and Calum gets so much out of it.

**You: Well, how about becoming a sectional assistant with the scouts. It wouldn't mean helping out every week. You could try doing one meeting a term to start with. We could use your fitness skills for some of the more adventurous activities we're planning. There's a hike next month and in June the scouts are going to an indoor climbing wall. How about it?**

Bob: Sounds great. Do I need to do anything 'official'?

**You: There's a form to fill in, and it depends if you would like to wear a uniform and make the scout promise. It's entirely up to you. Let's talk more once we're back home, eh?**

**[Note: Your camp may not have a fire, but there will be times that lend themselves to having the conversation when you ask a parent about their future involvement. The important thing is to choose your moment.]**

## The follow up – script

This is the last opportunity you'll have to use the good feeling created at camp to convert your target parents to support you more. This script uses the example of a four week challenge to hook the parent into, but you may have an alternative idea, or adopt a more flexible approach (or have a non-section based role in mind, depending on what you know about the parent).

**You: Kirsty, thank you for all your help at the weekend. It was really appreciated and the young people had a great time.**

Kirsty: Thanks! James hasn't stopped talking about it and is even asking when the next one is. I had a great time too. I must admit I did have my reservations about getting involved, but seeing all the young people have a great time and learn so much just made it all so worthwhile.

**You: I'm really pleased you both enjoyed it. I just wondered if you would be interested in our four week challenge. This is something new we're starting; we're asking parents to come and help at the section meeting for four consecutive weeks. This way you get to see what happens at a section meeting and we get an extra pair of hands to help run it. Also if you enjoy it, you might decide that you would like to keep coming at the end of the four weeks...**

Kirsty: Oh well, I am not too sure about that, I work and don't think I would be able to come every week.

**You: I understand, but you had such a great time at camp and we'd really like your help and support. You can have just as much fun at a section meeting as you can at camp. Why not give it a go? If you can't make all four weeks, that's fine. It also doesn't mean that you have to sign up and become a leader at the end of the four weeks. Maybe you'll decide that you really enjoyed the four weeks and would do it again in a few months' time.**

Kirsty: Um, well I did really enjoy camp, and I suppose I could manage attending the section meetings for just four weeks. When shall I start?

**You: You can start from next week if you like? We're working towards the creative challenge.**