

Developing Scouting in Minority Ethnic Communities



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This factsheet provides some key points to consider when developing Scouting within minority ethnic communities and neighbourhoods. These may be areas that do not currently have any Scouting provision or areas that have Scouting, but do not attract young people or adult volunteers from minority ethnic communities.

The current Scout Membership of young people from minority ethnic communities does not reflect the current minority ethnic population of the United Kingdom. Only 4% of the Association's total Membership is from minority ethnic communities compared to 8.8% of the national population.

The Scout Association aims to reflect the diversity of the community in which it operates and offer all young people the opportunity to enjoy the fun, challenge and adventure of Scouting.

Assessing the current local situation

Before planning any development work, it is essential to look at the situation very closely and to establish the local need.

- Relevant facts and figures can be used to provide a clear picture of the situation. Information about the local population is available from a variety of sources, for example:
 - the local council planning department;
 - the local youth service;
 - the local grant making departments;
 - the Racial Equality Councils;
 - local education authority and schools.

- The Office for National Statistics

www.statistics.gov.uk

- Information on existing youth provision. Sports and leisure facilities and the schools and colleges attended will be useful when looking for potential Members. This information will show the most appropriate places to target and the current competition for leisure time.
- Seeing an area, both during the day and evening, accompanied by people who know the community (e.g. local residents, police officers or health visitors) can often offer a real insight. This will help with the process of establishing the nature of the development work to be carried out, e.g. whether the local community is centred around a place of worship or community centre.

Good initial research will enable you to identify the need for development and sound coverage of all research areas in the early stages will save time later.

Research will show whether there is a demand for a particular Section or Group to be established within a community and/or whether existing provision should be expanded to involve members from minority ethnic communities.

Possible models

Experience has shown that there are three main models that can be used for working with and in minority ethnic communities. Each model has advantages and disadvantages but each has its place. The decision about which model to use should be made jointly by local Scouting and members of the community concerned

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- **Model 1 - Integration**

This model involves adults and young people from the minority ethnic communities joining an existing Scout Group. This might start with an interested adult approaching a Scout Group / Section and offering to become a Leader, Section Assistant or helper which might subsequently encourage young people from the community to join that Group / Section.

The advantages of this approach are that the various elements of the community start to integrate naturally and it offers a valuable learning opportunity for existing Scouting to be involved with the new Group.

In order to be effective however this model requires the existing Group to be open and receptive to this form of work and prepared to change and adapt their practices. In addition the adults from the minority community have to be very committed to becoming involved in Scouting and also need to be open minded.

It should be noted that this form of provision is unlikely to engage widespread support from the minority community, although it can be very useful in providing "Scouting experience" for adults from the community before they start a separate Section or Group themselves.

- **Model 2 - Separate or Satellite Section**

In this model a Section, largely run by and aimed at people from a particular minority community, is opened within a existing Scout Group.

There are a number of advantages to this approach, particularly since it uses the existing structure and infrastructure of the Group such as the Group Scout Leader, Group Executive, Group equipment etc Support for new leaders is immediately available and often there will already be people in the Group with experience of the Section involved thus enabling the sharing of programme ideas and the provision of advice.

Whilst support and advice is easily available the new Section can run separately perhaps with a "specialist" feel, this "feel" might be particularly important in engaging the support of parents. Over time of course, joint activities and events can

increasingly be used to integrate both adults and young people across the Group.

This model needs all the members of the existing Group to be open and receptive to the idea and to be open to change, perhaps including the need to adapt longstanding practices.

A number of committed adults from the minority community are required to open and run the Section and it is likely that they will have a steep learning curve.

- **Model 3 - New Group**

This model involves opening a completely new Group within the minority community.

This model tends to be particularly attractive for the minority community since it enables the Group to be run in a culturally appropriate style and have its own identity. This issue of identity is likely to be quite important for many people and particularly important if the Group is to gain the support of parents and other in the community.

The model does however require a large number of committed adults together with the standard Group infrastructure such as a Group Executive, equipment, a meeting place and sufficient finances etc. to be put in place. The adults involved from the community again face a steep learning curve, particularly if they have not been involved in Scouting before. Considerable support and guidance needs to be provided from outside the Group, at both District and County/Area level, potentially for a very significant period, often well in excess of 12 months.

Preparing the District/County/Area Team to support development

Support from the County and District is very important during the development of new and existing Scout Groups. Experience has shown the following:

- **Communication**

Effective communication, between all parties involved is critical. As well as the need for clear and effective communication between the District / development team and the members of the

minority community interested in starting Scouting, problems can arise if there is poor communication between the development team and Groups who do not have direct involvement with the work. If some Leaders believe that existing Groups require more Leaders, Members or equipment, they may not see the benefits of developing Scouting within minority ethnic communities. Open communication about the proposed development work and the benefits to everyone involved is vital. It is essential that District Commissioners are fully aware of what is happening. They can both promote the work in hand and, if necessary, mediate.

- **Flexibility**

Scout Districts have to be prepared to learn about new cultures and beliefs. Flexibility is necessary to enable a new Group to form or an existing one to expand. For example, the timing of Group meetings may have to be scheduled around religious services or other obligations such as religious education lessons, standard uniforms may need to be adapted or traditional programmes and ceremonies developed or revised. This may have an impact wider than just the Group affect District County/Area events and activities.

- **Understanding**

It is important that an understanding of minority ethnic communities' cultures, and the needs and aspirations of young people within those communities is developed. Cultural awareness workshops are a useful first step and local seminars and training can be organised in conjunction with your Field Development Officer.

Cultural differences should not be viewed as cultural problems in fact these differences can be beneficial and add a whole new dimension to an existing Scout Group or District.

Adults already within Scouting creating an environment where lack of understanding both about Scouting and its practises is tolerated. This

sort of knowledge is developed over time not over night.

Racism can destroy a project, so it is important to help people challenge any prejudice before it causes irreparable damage to relationships made with local communities.

- **Ownership**

Ownership of the development work by all parties involved is very important. The identified local community should not feel that Scouting is being "forced" on them; they should be fully involved with its establishment.

Everyone involved must have a clear understanding of their commitment to the tasks to ensure that the planned development work proceeds. The level of support that a new or existing Scout Group will receive from the District/County/Area should be clearly defined, as well as the responsibilities that the Group take on. This could mean that the County Training Manager needs to organise additional training sessions or that an experienced Leader assists at the meetings of a new Scout Group for a given time period. Responsibilities need to be clearly identified and the team involved in planning and managing the development work should consider all sources of help and not expect existing Leaders to over stretch themselves.

Developing contacts within local communities

Contact with key people within the community is essential. The influential people may or may not be religious leaders, so it is important that all possible contacts are sought. Local youth officers, Racial Equality officers or head teachers will be able to provide specific contact names for the minority ethnic communities within your District.

Many local places of worship operate an "open door policy", so feel free to walk in and ask for

information. If people are available they will try and provide the information requested.

Promoting Scouting to minority ethnic communities

The marketing of Scouting to minority ethnic communities is an important aspect to consider. Interested community leaders should be encouraged to gain a greater understanding of the issues concerned by visiting local Scout Groups. However, there will still be questions to answer. Parents and community leaders will want to know what the benefits of Scouting will be for their children. Relatives may have been involved in Scouting in their countries of origin and know the advantages of being a Scout, but will want to know about the benefits of Scouting in the United Kingdom.

The following are a few suggested marketing points which can be used. Scouting enables young people and adults to:

- enjoy a complimentary informal education system;
- develop skills, such as working with other people;
- develop a sense of responsibility for their local and wider communities and environment;
- participate in a structured, exciting and challenging leisure time activity;
- make friends and share experiences
- develop spiritually through the Balanced Programme offered to each age group;
- understand the spiritual value of life beyond the material world;
- increase pride in their cultural identity and through this enhance their own self-esteem;
- have an advantage over others when applying for employment because employees often look favourably on young people who have been involved in Scouting.

An important factor to remember when promoting Scouting is that the expected uptake may not match the reality. It may take longer than expected for the interest to be generated, but the key thing is to persevere! It is useful to obtain an understanding of the decision making process that will be followed. This may be a much slower process than the development team are used to working within, so teams should be patient and not decide that the project is not worth pursuing too early.

Adult help and support is essential when either expanding or developing a Scout Group. Adults who become involved will also benefit by being able to:

- work with young people from their community with whom they can readily identify;
- follow a training programme that will encourage personal development;
- learn new skills;
- do something challenging and enjoyable in their spare time.

The District should take into account that volunteering is common within the social structure of many cultures but the initial reaction towards helping within the Scout Group could be slow. It should be appreciated that this is probably due to other commitments. Potential volunteers may have more than one job or help at their place of worship or within the local community, rather than be reluctant to help.

Common misconceptions about Scouting

As a Scouter, or a supporter of Scouting, you will have come across several of the common misconceptions held by people who have had little or no contact with modern Scouting.

You may have to reassure potential supporters that the Movement is not just for white, male, middle class Christians. Scouting is a world-wide, multi-faith Organisation that has always reflected the different religious and cultural obligations of its Members. Emphasise that the Purpose and Method of The Scout Association reinforce the beliefs of many cultures and religions, and that this is achieved by following the Scout Promise and Law and through the provision of a Balanced Programme.

If queries arise over the Scout Promise, point out the different variations available and how they take account of the different religious and citizenship obligations of potential Members. If queries arise about uniform, explain that the Scout uniform may be adapted to incorporate religious and cultural dress requirements.

(see factsheet FS322016, The Promise)

Further information relating to the culture, food, dress etc. of different ethnic communities is available in a separate series of fact sheets and at www.scoutbase.org.uk/ps/fab/resources/index/htm

Community meetings

Experience suggests that often it will be useful to make a brief presentation, possibly with the key initiator/supporter of the project, to the community's council, committee or membership. Once the initial concerns about developing Scouting, as an activity for both young people and adults from the community, have been addressed, project managers should seek gain a commitment from the community, particularly in terms of recruiting leaders and obtaining practical and financial support for the Group.

It is important that the information put across at these meetings is relevant to the community, as this will give more specific understanding of how

Scouting can benefit them. This can be achieved by prior discussion and research about religious and cultural obligations held by the individual communities.

Recruitment and training of adult volunteers Helpers

The recruitment of adult volunteers should be the highest priority. All contacts should be exploited fully and every attempt should be made to recruit volunteers from the local community. Different strategies may have to be used to recruit adults with little or no understanding of Scouting. Presentations and the opportunity of visiting existing Groups can help to develop an initial interest. Training sessions and activity weekends can follow up these initial tasters.

It is essential to give newly recruited volunteers or prospective volunteers appropriate training as quickly as possible. This gives them a greater understanding of both the role that they are taking on and the support available to them. Placements to existing Scout Groups (especially in the case of new Scout Groups) and other activities should be arranged to increase knowledge and maintain enthusiasm.

Recruitment of Young people

It is only once (and only once) the community is behind the development of Scouting and an adult leadership team has been recruited and the initial paper work started, that the young people can be recruited. Often this can be done by word of mouth, however various more active methods can also be employed. These include:

- presentations in schools, colleges, community centres and places of worship;
- taster activity days at a local Scout camp site;

- taster evenings, run on an invitation or drop-in basis.

The Group Executive Committee

It may be possible to recruit volunteers onto the Group Executive Committee from parents' meeting and other presentations. The following are some important points to consider:

- some communities may have committees supporting a cultural or religious centre. These could become a Group Executive Committee if appropriate support is given.
- when an individual community wishes to start and support its own Group, greater backing is received if members of the Executive Committee are closely linked with the chosen meeting place. This could be a religious or community centre, a school or other suitable building;
- for existing Scout Groups with culturally mixed Membership, a neutral meeting place should be found and the Group Executive Committee formed from the supporters and parents;
- clear explanations of the responsibilities of the Executive Committee should be given at an early stage, so that confusion does not arise and the Committee can provide support to the Group as soon as possible;
- a District Administrator, or an experienced member of the District or a Group Executive Committee could provide the initial help and support that the committee may require.
- If it is not possible to find enough adults to form an Executive initially, it maybe possible to use

the District Executive for an agreed period of time as a substitute body.

Further information and help

Factsheets about Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Jewish, Rastafari and Buddhist communities are available from:

www.scoutbase.org.uk/ps/fab/resources/index/htm

The local Field Development Officer / Field Commissioner / Country Headquarters together with the Development & Diversity Team at Gilwell Park can also be contacted for advice and support if necessary on 0845 300 1818.

Related factsheets:

FS5000111, Opening a new Scout Group

FS185030, Know your neighbours