

# Inclusive Decision Making in Scouting

## 1. Introduction

Voluntary organisations today are highly regulated, and this puts the onus on those in charge to be fully accountable for how the organisation conducts its affairs. That said, Scouting remains a voluntary movement of and for young people, supported primarily by Adult Volunteers at all levels.

Inclusive decision-making at all levels is essential to ensure quality decisions that are informed by the views and experiences of all of those involved and to enable the successful delivery of our educational and developmental objectives.

This document sets out further the need for the inclusion of all Scouters and youth members in decision-making at all levels and how this may be achieved.

## 2. Inclusive Decision Making

At National level the Board is responsible for deciding on Strategy and setting priorities, as well as agreeing budgets and staffing allocations. In a Scout Group the Group Council is responsible for a similar range of decisions. The Directors and the members of Group Council are responsible for the decisions they make and can be held accountable for the consequences of those decisions.

Also, the County Commissioner with the County Team and the Provincial Commissioner with the Provincial Team are responsible for making decisions of consequence and are accountable for those decisions.

In each Programme Section the Programme Scouters are responsible for oversight of the Youth Programme and so are accountable for decisions made in relation to the Programme Section.

It is vital that an inclusive approach is taken to decision making at all levels for a number of reasons:

- (a) Involving those most affected provides for more informed consideration and a better decision
- (b) Involvement in the decision-making process leads to a better understanding of the decision and usually improves the level of acceptance of it
- (c) Ongoing inclusion in decision-making serves to build a bond with those involved and they are more likely to stay longer
- (d) Inclusion in the process helps those involved to develop their teamworking and decision-making skills which contributes to the delivery of our aim and the sustainability of our organisation

Those who have a role as Trustees or Directors (principally the Group Council and the Board) must respect the inherent nature of Scouting as a voluntary movement of and for young people, supported primarily by Adult Volunteers at all levels and they must recognise the necessity for inclusive decision-making at all levels for the success of the organisation.

## 3. Youth Involvement in Decision Making

The aim of Scouting is to contribute to the education and development of young people, to help build a better world where people are self-fulfilled as individuals and play a constructive role in society.

The Scout Method is an essential system for achieving this educational objective and effective Youth Involvement is a vital feature of the Scout Method, without it we cannot achieve our aim. In order to empower young people to play an active part in society they need to be enabled with the required skills and allowed to use them.

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Youth Involvement means that young people are not only the beneficiaries of the educational process, but also the ones who take charge of their own development. The level of Youth Involvement and participation in decision making increases as the youth member grows older transforming from youth participation into youth leadership. This results in greater autonomy and responsibility for youth members as they grow older.

Using the skills and experience gained through the Youth Programme, youth members may also become involved in decision making in wider society, for example, through participation in such things as youth fora, consultative / advisory groups, action groups, and development projects.

Every Scouter should ensure that the youth members are properly involved in decision making both within the organisation and beyond as appropriate to their age range and their stage of development.

Young Adults in Scouting, whether members of the older Programme Sections or in leadership positions, should be active participants in decision-making in matters related to the organisation and management of Scouting. Young Adults should also be active representatives of Scouting in relationships with external bodies. Appropriate training should be provided for Young Adults in these roles.

## 4. Decision Making in the Programme Section

The Youth Programme is delivered through the use of the Scout Method and the Plan-Do-Review approach. It is a single programme which is delivered in an age-appropriate way in all Programme Sections.

The Plan-Do-Review approach means that youth members

- Are involved in planning meetings, activities, and events
- Participate as part of their team and may lead the team
- Help review how things went and what might be improved for the next time

This is an essential part of the Scouting experience as it allows youth members to learn by doing and to develop their decision-making, teamworking and leadership skills.

Youth members are supported in a way that is appropriate to their age and stage of development as they create and manage their own Scouting experiences. The role of the Programme Scouter is to assist, support, facilitate and motivate in a manner which recognises the needs and abilities of the age range and stage of development of the youth members.

The decision-making process in a Programme Section should take account of the age range and stage of development of the youth members.

### 4.1. Beaver Scouts

Beaver Scouts have a voice in what is happening in their Lodge and Colony. This is done through review games and at Lodge gatherings. Lodge gatherings should be managed by the Programme Scouters, but they exist to get the opinions of the Beaver Scouts and to take account of these opinions when making decisions for the programme.

A Lodge does not have a permanent leader. Every Lodge member should be given the chance of leading the Lodge at some time. Individual Beaver Scouts should be given responsibility for minor jobs, such as setting up for activities and tidying up afterwards, to further develop their ability to take on such jobs.

Every Beaver Scout should have a job within the Lodge, for example minding equipment, putting notices on the board, etc. Programme Scouters ensure that each Beaver Scout is given the chance to

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take on additional responsibility as they develop. Beaver Scouts are encouraged to show to others that they can be responsible and to look after the world in small ways.

### **4.2. Cub Scouts**

Cub Scouts are given more responsibility and more say in the running of the programme and as a result can do more. Responsibility is the key to helping the Cub Scout grow as it teaches them to look after themselves and to look out for others. They spend more time working in small groups and making decisions as a team.

Each Six has a leader (Sixer) and assistant leader (Secunder). Every Cub Scout should have a job to do in the Six and they should be given more responsible jobs as they progress.

The Pack Forum is the place where the entire Pack discuss programme. One person from each Six acts as "Scribe" and records the ideas that arise there, they give this to their Sixer for discussion at Sixers Council. The Sixer's Council should meet periodically to chat about things and to guide the direction of programme. Ideas from Pack Forum that are not incorporated into the next programme cycle should remain on the list for consideration next time around.

Programme Scouters should ensure that each Cub Scout is given the chance to take on additional responsibility as they develop and the chance to act as the leader of a small group on a regular basis.

### **4.3. Scouts**

In the Scout Troop, the Patrol should be the grouping for most meetings, activities, and events. More and more should be done in Patrols and Patrols should be encouraged to organise separate meetings, activities, and events on a regular basis. Each Scout will share their needs, their requirements and their suggestions with the Patrol, and the Patrol Leader will represent the views of their Patrol members at the Patrol Leaders Council. The Patrol Leaders Council will direct the Scout Troop, will plan and review the programme, and will help maintain good order in the Troop.

Most activity is done in Patrols and each Patrol will make decisions for itself, review its own progress, and decide on its own future plans. The Patrol Leader, with the Assistant Patrol Leader, has overall responsibility for the Patrol and should encourage each Scout to take on more responsibility as they progress over time. Each Scout should be given the opportunity to take on a leadership role on a regular basis; different activities, events or projects should be used to provide such opportunities.

### **4.4. Venture Scouts**

A strong emphasis on teamwork and development of leadership skills continues in the Venture Scout Section. The Venture Scout Section is organised into small teams called Crews. Crews may be formed for a specific activity or event, or they may be established on a more long-term basis. The Venture Scouts are supported and advised by a dedicated team of Programme Scouters, whose role is to guide and mentor the Venture Scouts as they develop their skills in planning and organisation. A Venture Scout Section may elect a number of its members to act as a Venture Scout Executive to coordinate the operation of the Section.

### **4.5. Rover Scouts**

Rover Scouts usually take on their activities with small groups of others who have the same interest, these small groups are referred to as "Teams". The programme for the Rover Scout Section is largely project based with the Team working together to plan, do and review the project. Each Rover Scout picks what they want to pursue and how they will do it and on occasion they may pursue some activities on their own, rather than as a Team member. The role of the Programme Scouter for the Rover Scout Section is to act as an advisor to support the Rover Scouts as they make their own decisions.

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## 5. Decision Making in the Scout Group

The Group Leader, with the Group Council, should ensure a supportive environment for the involvement by youth members and Programme Scouters in decision making in the Scout Group.

### 5.1. Group Youth Forum and Group Youth Champion

The Group Youth Champion is elected by the youth members in the Scout Group. They convene meetings of the Group Youth forum and represent the interests of the youth members at meetings of the Scout Group Council.

### 5.1. AGM of the Scout Group

The Annual General Meeting of the Scout Group shall include, amongst others:

- Up to three Programme Scouters from the Beavers Scouts, Cub Scouts, Scouts, Venture Scouts and three members elected by the Rover Scouts
- All members of the Group Youth Forum

### 5.3. General Meetings of Scouting Ireland

The Scout Group shall reserve at least 2 of its 5 delegates for General Meetings of Scouting Ireland for youth members of the Scout Group.

### 5.4. The Scout Group Programme Committee

In 2017 the idea of a Scout Group Programme Committee was proposed as an option for Scout Groups who were registering as charities to enable them to comply with the regulations about Boards of Trustees (Group Councils) while maintaining the active involvement of Scouters and youth members in decision making within the Scout Group. Some Scout Groups may still be operating this approach although it does not seem to be covered by publication or official document issued since the adoption of a new constitution in October 2018.

The approach seems to be worth consideration and there appears to be no reason why Scout Groups would not adopt it to better enable informed decision making within their Scout Group.

As the Group Leader oversees and coordinates the activities of the Programme Sections, the Scout Group Council could request the Group Leader to convene a Scout Group Programme Committee, to ensure that the Youth Programme is operated effectively to the best ability of the Scout Group and to provide for the support of Youth Programme within the Scout Group across all Programme Sections.

The relationship between the Scout Group Council and its sub-committee, the Scout Group Programme Committee, should be instrumental to a positive and healthy Scout Group. The aims, principles, and ethos of Scouting Ireland should guide all members of the Scout Group Programme Committee in their deliberations.

The members of the Scout Group Programme Committee could include:

- a) The Group Leader and/or Deputy Group Leader(s)
- b) An equal number of youth programme representatives from the Scout, Venture Scout, and Rover Scout Programme Sections, where possible\*
- c) An equal number of Programme Scouters from each of the Programme Sections within the Scout Group, where possible \*
- d) The Quartermaster / Bo'sun
- e) The Scout Group Trainer

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- f) Others as agreed by the Scout Group Council

The functions of the Scout Group Programme Committee could include:

- To ensure that the Youth Programme is operated effectively to the best ability of the Scout Group
- To provide for the support of Youth Programme within the Scout Group across all Programme Sections
- To ensure that the Programme Sections operate the Youth Programme in accordance with the Aims, Principles, and Method of Scouting Ireland
- To coordinate the training of all Group Scouters and youth members as required
- The Scout Group Programme Committee should provide for the expression of views of the youth members and Programme Scouters of each Programme Section. It shall also provide for the formulation of recommendations and proposals for consideration by Group Council.

\* The Group Council should decide, in consultation with Programme Scouters and youth members, on how many representatives are appropriate, this may vary depending on considerations such as the size of the Scout Group and the number of Programme Sections.

## 6. Decision Making at County Level

The County Commissioner, with the County Team, should ensure a supportive environment for the involvement by youth members and Programme Scouters in decision-making in the County. They shall also support Scout Groups in the implementation of an inclusive approach to decision making.

### 6.1. County Youth Fora

County Youth Fora provide for the expression of views and formulation of recommendations, recognising that such fora in Scouting provide a dual opportunity

- Enabling young people to discuss issues of interest to them and to make recommendations on these, and
- Providing them the opportunity to learn the skills necessary to empower them to take part in decision-making in Scouting and in society.

The County Team is responsible for the organisation of County Youth Fora.

The following County Youth Fora should be provided at least once per year:

- County Youth Forum for Scouts
- County Youth Forum for Venture Scouts
- County Youth Forum for Rover Scouts

The County Team should decide how many from each Scout Group may attend each forum, this may vary depending on considerations such as the size of the Scout Group and the number of Programme Sections.

### 6.2. County Youth Representatives

Each County Youth Forum should elect six people (County Youth Representatives) to represent their views between meetings of the forum.

- Following the Fora, the County Team should invite the County Youth Representatives to meet with them to discuss the views expressed and the decisions reached at the Fora.

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- The County Youth Representatives from each County Youth Forum shall have the right to attend and make submissions and proposals to the County Team at any stage during the year by arrangement with the County Secretary.
- The County Youth Representatives shall be members of the County Board.
- The County Youth Representatives from each County Youth Forum shall be represented on the County Team by two of their number.
- The County Youth Representatives shall represent the views of youth members in their County at Provincial and National Youth Fora.

### **7. Decision Making at Provincial Level**

The Provincial Commissioner, with the Provincial Team, should ensure a supportive environment for the involvement by youth members in decision-making in the Province and also the active participation by Young Scouters. They shall also support the County Teams in the implementation of an inclusive approach to decision making.

It is understood that at present the practice of organising youth fora and appointing youth representatives at Provincial level has been discontinued. Provincial Teams may consider this a regretted loss of youth involvement at Provincial level, in which case they may determine that they should re-introduce the practice in their Province.

#### **7.1. Provincial Youth Fora**

Provincial Youth Fora provide for the expression of views and formulation of recommendations, recognising that such Fora in Scouting provide a dual opportunity

- Enabling young people to discuss issues of interest to them and to make recommendations on these, and
- Providing them the opportunity to learn the skills necessary to empower them to take part in decision-making in Scouting and in society.

The Provincial Team is responsible for the organisation of Provincial Youth Fora.

The following Provincial Youth Fora should be provided at least once per year:

- Provincial Youth Forum for Scouts
- Provincial Youth Forum for Venture Scouts
- Provincial Youth Forum for Rover Scouts

The County Youth Representatives should represent the views of their County Youth Fora at the Provincial Youth Fora.

#### **7.2. Provincial Youth Representatives**

Each Provincial Youth Forum should each elect six people (Provincial Youth Representatives) to represent their views between meetings of the forum.

- Following the Fora, the Provincial Team should invite the Provincial Youth Representatives to meet with them to discuss the views expressed and the decisions reached at the Fora.
- The Provincial Youth Representatives from each Provincial Youth Forum should have the right to attend and make submissions and proposals to the Provincial Team at any stage during the year by arrangement with the Provincial Secretary.

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- The Provincial Youth Representatives from each Provincial Youth Forum should be represented on the Provincial Team by two of their number.
- The Provincial Youth Representatives should represent the views of youth members in their Province at the National Youth Fora.

It should be noted that some issues may arise concerning the representation of the views at National Youth Fora if Provincial Youth Representatives are not recognised by the organisers of National Youth Fora.

### **8. Decision Making at National Level**

It is to be expected that the Programme Services Department and its teams, will endeavour to ensure a supportive environment for the involvement by youth members and Programme Scouters in decision-making at National level. They may also support the Provincial Teams in the implementation of an inclusive approach to decision making.

#### **8.1. National Youth Fora**

National Youth Fora provide for the expression of views and formulation of recommendations, recognising that such Fora in Scouting provide a dual opportunity

- Enabling young people to discuss issues of interest to them and to make recommendations on these, and
- Providing them the opportunity to learn the skills necessary to empower them to take part in decision-making in Scouting and in society.

The Programme Services Department is responsible for the organisation of National Youth Fora.

The following National Youth Fora should be provided at least once per year:

- National Youth Forum for Scouts
- National Youth Forum for Venture Scouts
- National Youth Forum for Rover Scouts

#### **8.2. National Youth Representatives**

Each National Youth Forum should each elect six people (National Youth Representatives) to represent their views between meetings of the forum.

- Following the Fora, the CEO and Management Team should invite the National Youth Representatives to meet with them to discuss the views expressed and the decisions reached at the Fora.
- The National Youth Representatives from each National Youth Forum should have the right to attend and make submissions and proposals to the CEO and Management Team at any stage during the year by arrangement with the CEO.
- If a matter remains unresolved following a submission or proposal to the CEO and Management Team, the National Youth Representatives from each National Youth Forum should have the right to attend and discuss the matter with the Board by arrangement with the Company Secretary.
- County, Province, or National Youth Representatives may be considered for inclusion in other national committees or teams as appropriate.