

District Commissioners Briefing: Implementing the national skills for life strategy locally across South London Scouts



Since our skills for life strategy was launched, the steps taken by our county have helped to support our volunteers and equip many more young people with skills for life through our amazing programme.

But, during the pandemic, we couldn't carry on as normal. We rallied and responded to the challenge, adapting scouting to meet new realities and refocused on retention rather than growth. Doing all that was tough on all of us. It also meant pausing full implementation of our strategy plans.

Now, as we look to the future, with a renewed appreciation that scouting has never been more needed, it's time for us to recommit to implementing our strategy and focus on the next two years, as we look to realise all the objectives in the plan that we agreed together at our county conference in 2018.

Transforming the volunteer journey

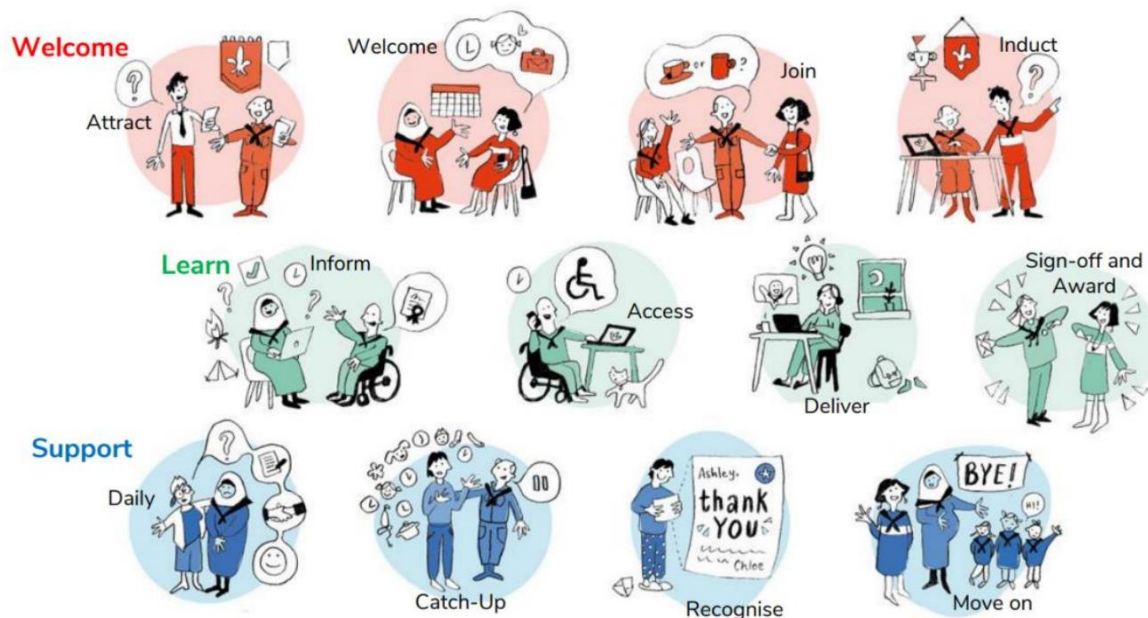
As part of delivering the national [skills for life strategy](#), we're going to transform the volunteering experience across the nation. We want to make sure our volunteers feel valued for everything that they do and most of all, we want them to enjoy themselves.

Together across the UK, we are aiming to:

- Recruit **10,000 more** frontline volunteers
- Have a **compelling volunteer offer** that demonstrates the value and benefit of volunteering for the scouts
- Ensure our **volunteer roles** are modern, manageable, and fit for purpose
- Have an improved and **seamless joining and learning** journey
- Have more **volunteers from a diverse range of backgrounds** that reflect the demographics of society

To do this, lots of different national teams are fundamentally reviewing our whole volunteer journey. These teams are working closely with volunteers on the ground (and those not yet involved), to design processes that provide a great experience and makes the best use of digital technology. The teams are also currently focusing on the needs of section leader teams and the vital role they have in directly delivering amazing scouting to young people. This will be followed by reviewing the support that these volunteers need, how they are managed, and the local governance roles required, ensuring all these roles work together to maximise our ability to equip young people with skills for life.

This is how volunteering will look...



Ultimately, we want to make sure:

- every volunteer is welcomed
- every volunteer is supported
- every volunteer is valued
- every volunteer gains skills (and has fun!)
- every volunteer matters

To do this the teams are working to create a modern and fit-for-purpose volunteering culture with skills for life at the core (that's volunteer-centric too). This includes working on volunteer culture guidance to increase accountability and transparency, outlining our commitment to volunteers and a volunteer's commitment to scouts. The aim is for the guidance to reflect the key improvements to the volunteering experience.

Change 1: A warmer welcome for everyone

We're going to make a better first impression for new or returning volunteers. It'll be clear where to sign up, what to expect, and what stage they are at. They will also be in control of moving this forward as much as possible.

This will be supported by a new digital experience which will be part of scouts.org.uk – so you can easily find everything you need in one place. All of the new digital tools we're going to build there are being designed with your needs in mind and will be tested with volunteers to make sure they do what they need to do. The welcome section of scouts.org.uk will:

- be as self-service as possible for new volunteers, reducing admin for our current volunteers and making the process quicker and smoother. This will allow our volunteers to focus on the elements that really need a human touch
- show personalised volunteering opportunities with the ability to apply directly
- help line managers and teams to post and edit opportunities, monitor a volunteers' progress as they join, and oversee recruitment. You'll have clear oversight of who's joining in your area and anywhere that things might be getting delayed
- help streamline vetting and joining tasks where possible, making it easier to welcome new people.

A warmer welcome means changes to our in-person processes too. These will include:

- a welcome conversation in place of the formal appointments panel, which will happen where the volunteer usually meets their group
- Better support for inductions

There will also be more support with recruiting new volunteers:

- we'll continue to provide you with more resources and templates for local recruitment, supported by our national #GoodForYou recruitment campaign and other initiatives
- potential volunteers can already head to scouts.org.uk/volunteer which shows why volunteering at Scouts is #GoodForYou – interested people will go through to a new online volunteer enquiry form that can be accessed by managers.

Change 2: A more engaging learning experience

Our programme's always been about 'learning by doing' to help young people develop skills for life. It should be the same for our volunteers.

We know learning needs to be flexible, accessible, and easy to deliver and record. We also know people learn best through a combination of online and in-person learning, so our approach will be digital first but will include workshops and 'on the job' stuff (these will offer networking opportunities too).

One of the new areas of scouts.org.uk will be a learning section that's personalised to each volunteer:

- all of their past, present and future scouts learning will be there – you/they can easily see what's been completed, what comes next, and anything else that's relevant to your/their role
- There will be great learning resources that are easy to find and access – whether on a computer, tablet or phone
- They'll be shown how learning is directly useful for what they are doing in scouting and there will be lots of support to put it into practice

A focus on learning that's engaging, relevant and enjoyable:

- there are some things we all need to know, but the majority of learning will be optional
- for the essential bits, volunteers will be able to learn as they go, so it won't feel too daunting
- individuals will be able to customise and define their learning needs, so they will learn what's relevant to them in ways that make sense

- learning shouldn't be about spending time on administration and validation – we'll cut this down to make sure the focus is on the practical stuff that helps all of us to be better
- we'll develop ways to recognise prior learning or existing skills, so there's no need to go over areas that people already know
- there will be the opportunity to chat to others who are learning about the same topics, so everyone can build a network of support

Change 3: More support to help you get everyday things done

Our volunteering roles need to be clear, manageable, and flexible.

We know that asking people to become leaders (or other specific roles) doesn't suit everyone. People need to be able to volunteer in whichever way they can and want to do, focusing on the areas they have skills or interest in – and without having to take on the world.

Teams thrive when they share a purpose, share tasks, and support each other to make the most of their different skills, experiences and available time. So:

- we'll think about volunteering as teams-based. This means that tasks could be assigned based on who's most interested or suited, opening up new opportunities and helping to make volunteering more flexible and enjoyable
- it's vital that we make sure every team, task or role is easy to understand, appealing, and needed
- we'll ask volunteers to read and use our volunteering culture guidance. This shares our mutual commitment to you and asks, in return, that we all live up to our values.

The new experience at scouts.org.uk will also include other everyday membership management tools that will better integrate with how we do things. This should result in a simpler, slicker, more joined-up process.

What's next?

UKHQ are currently testing the proposed solutions to make sure the concepts will work locally – you can [find out more and feedback on the testing hub](#).

Leading national change

Our challenge over the coming years is to continue implementing our own county plan and our local implementation of the national volunteer transformation, ensuring county wide consistency, as part of the national skills for life strategy.

As we prepare for these further changes, our county leadership team have responsibilities to ensure that a focus is maintained on restarting scouting and returning to 'business as usual', while steps are taken to prepare for changes that will be released over the next two years, in a way which will not overwhelm local scouting.

For that reason, UKHQ have asked counties, areas, and regions, etc (sometimes shortened to CARE), to identify someone to be their transformation lead.

We are in a great position! With a well-established and highly respected development service that for many years has been focussed on recruiting and supporting our volunteers we have asked Matt to take on the transformational lead role as part of his workload. With his experience and knowledge, Matt will help drive forward the volunteer experience transformation and help to plan, support and lead change locally.

Our plan is to build a small team, made up of a representative from each district to help prepare and support your district, groups, units and networks for all of the exciting changes that we anticipate rolling out over the next few years.

With this in mind, please start to think about who you can ask to take on the important role in your district. Your transformation champion should not be you, although they will be expected to work closely with you. This can be a share role and they could be someone already on the district team or could be an existing or new volunteer you identify who has interest in and perhaps experience with planning and change management. They really need to be an enthusiastic individual, keen to help prepare and support local scouting.

As well as working closely with you your transformation champion will need to liaise with your district chair and executive committee to update them of local change plans and seek the support needed to implement changes locally.

Key tasks

As a member of our county transformational team, they will:

- work with the team to take 'big picture' plans and county-wide proposals and help make them work in a local context – whilst taking into consideration our county-wide timeline and implementation plan
- supporting members in your district to connect the dots about what the changes mean to them
- help shape future ongoing support provided by our development service by feeding back what's working and what's not and thoughts on any additional support needed to support our volunteers at all levels

Personal qualities

Your transformation champion will be expected to:

- openly contribute their views and ideas
- be courageous and comfortable in talking about the importance of change
- put themselves in other people's shoes
- be patient and flexible when unforeseen obstacles pop up.
- be a trusted, calming voice

Time commitment

Much of this will depend on our agreed approach to implementing the cross-county changes locally. We anticipate that your transformation champion will need to:

- attend regular team meetings (some face-to-face and some on Zoom), to contribute to our plans and feedback on how things are landing locally, any challenges encountered, areas for improvement and exchanging of best practice
- set time aside on a regular basis to be the local go-to person, for change in your district, in partnership with our development service
- ensure they are able to meet with you, your team and your district executive, on a regular basis, as necessary

The way forward – our timeline

Over the weekend of 14th & 15th May five members of our county are attending the national conference, Basecamp22. This conference is the start of the next stage in our national and local journey to starting to think about implementing these ambitious plans.

Your actions:

May 2022	Discussion with the county leadership team (this document)
May to September 2022	DCs consider and appoint their district transformation champion(s)
By 31 st August	Let Matt know who your District Transformational Champion(s) is
Late September 2022	First meeting of our county volunteer journey transformation team

If you have any questions:

- please take a look at the national testing hub www.scouts.org.uk/about-us/testing-hub
or
- email Matt matt.butterfield@southlondonscouts.org.uk

You can also find out more about our county plan at
www.southlondonscouts.org.uk/skillsforlifeplan