

Scouting safely: leader in charge

All meetings, events and activities must have a leader in charge who has responsibility for coordinating all adults and young people.

Experience has shown that accidents can happen when there isn't a leader clearly designated as being in charge overall, or when that person makes an assumption that other people are looking after safety issues. Responses to accidents are also impaired in such circumstances.

Leader in charge

The leader in charge is, simply put, the adult present at an evening meeting, event or activity who has the role of coordinating the work of all adults towards delivering the programme in a safe manner. Scouting safely is not just about ensuring that risk assessments and safety checks are conducted; all adults need to be clear on what they need to do and young people should be given clear instructions, guidance or rules.

The leader in charge does not have to personally fill in every risk assessment; this can be done by someone else in discussion with other adults. Nor do they have to give rules or guidance to either young people or adults personally. Being the leader in charge is about being the person with an overview of safety in the given situation.

Putting this into practice

Any suitably qualified adult can be designated as being the leader in charge for a meeting, event or activity, but they would normally be someone holding a leader, manager or supporter appointment. The Group Scout Leader must support the arrangement and ensure that the designated leader in charge has satisfactorily completed the enquiry process.

It is extremely important that anyone who has been designated as the leader in charge fully understands their responsibilities. There should be no assumption that other adults are in charge. The leader in charge is responsible for overseeing the activity and all adults and young people. This includes responsibility for registers, headcounts, allocation of roles to specific adults and checking they are aware of their specific responsibilities. The best way of doing this is for all adults involved in the activity to agree which one of them will undertake this function.

Checks could include a discussion about risk assessments, selecting who will give guidance and instructions to young people and when and where head counts will be conducted. The leader in charge should also actively participate by keeping an overview of any activity.