



WE DISCOVER, WE GROW

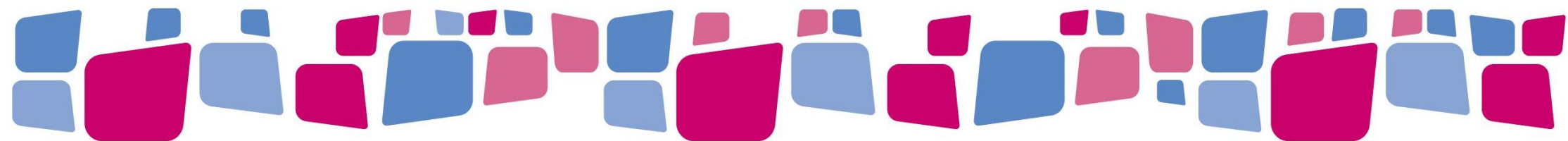
Girlguiding

Scotland

Flexible Guiding Conversation Starters:

A resource to help introduce adult members to
flexible approaches to guiding

Training pack



Flexible Guiding Conversation Starters:

A resource to help introduce adult members to flexible approaches to guiding

Contents

Introduction	1
Why have we created this resource?	
What's in this training pack?	
What are flexible guiding conversation starter cards?	3
What's in the Conversation Starter Powerpoint?	
How can I use these cards in training	4
How do I set the scene?	5
Conversation Starter Cards Nos 1 - 12	7
Rounding Up	19
Sources of further information	20

Introduction

This resource aims to help break down barriers which might prevent girls and adults from joining Girlguiding and/or staying connected to guiding when their personal circumstances change. It will challenge adult members to think about what flexible guiding means and encourage them to consider how flexible approaches can benefit volunteers, young members and parents. It also provides members with examples of flexible guiding in action, drawn from across Scotland to help show that flexible guiding can be tailored to suite different circumstances and geographies.

This resource is intended to be used in a group setting. It is designed to help start conversations and answer some of the most common questions around flexible guiding. You don't need to be a trainer to use the resource - we hope that commissioners and membership growth coordinators will also find it helpful.

If you would like help setting up a trainer-led session on flexible guiding please contact Girlguiding Scotland's Membership Development Team.

This resource consists of four parts:

- 1. Training pack (this document)**
- 2. Conversation Starter cards**
- 3. Conversation Starter PowerPoint**
- 4. Flexible Guiding in Action case study pack**

Each of the parts can be downloaded from the Girlguiding Scotland website.

Why have we created this resource?

This resource supports the ACCESS strand of Girlguiding Scotland's strategic plan which focuses on reducing barriers to being involved in guiding. By thinking flexibly we could bring more members into guiding and make the experience of existing members more rewarding. It will also help young and adult members stay in guiding as their lives evolve.

What's in this training pack?

This training pack will introduce you to the flexible guiding conversation starter cards and explain how they can be used in different training settings to start discussions about the benefits flexible approaches can offer volunteers, girls and parents.

The pack will also give you the contextual information you need to set the scene at the start of any training session. This will help your group to understand what is meant by flexible guiding and how it could offer solutions to local challenges.

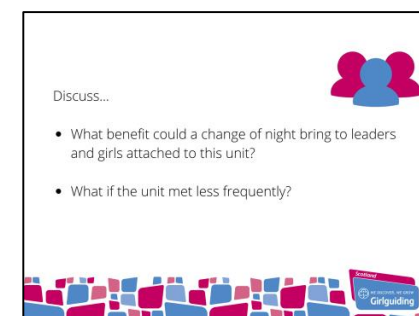
The pack includes some sample training plans for different types of training sessions but these are just suggestions. There's also a list of useful links and contacts if you would like further information.

This pack can also be used alongside the **Flexible Guiding in Action case study pack** which can be downloaded from the Girlguiding Scotland website. This includes examples drawn from across Scotland that can be used as standalone discussion prompts or used to challenge those that are convinced 'that'll never work here'!

What are flexible guiding conversation starter cards?

We've created a set of postcard-sized conversation starter cards to help get discussions going around a range of topics connected to flexible guiding.

Each card contains a question on one side and a set of discussion prompts on the reverse. These are intended to facilitate conversations within small groups.



You'll find the answers to the questions posed on the cards in this pack and in the accompanying PowerPoint that's also available from the Girlguiding Scotland website.

What's in the Conversation Starter Powerpoint?

The PowerPoint that accompanies this pack contains some introductory slides covering what flexible guiding is and why it is important. There are then 3 slides relating to each of the numbered cards. These cover the question, the discussion prompts and the key points to take away from the discussion of each card.

How can I use these cards in training?

These cards can be used within a larger flexible guiding training session or more informally as part of a district or division meeting, for example. You can tailor your approach to fit the amount of time you have available and the group you're working with but we recommend following these basic principles:

1. Start by setting the scene

You'll find information to help you explain what flexible guiding is and why it is relevant to your area in this pack and in the supporting PowerPoint. Sharing this information will help set the scene for your discussions.

2. Create small discussion groups

This resource works best with smaller groups of 2 - 8 people. Provide each group with pens and paper to help them jot down key points from their discussion. They'll use their notes to feedback later.

3. Distribute the cards among your groups

Time will dictate whether you distribute all the cards or just a few. Each card is marked *Girls*, *Adults* or *Units* to indicate whether they are focused on flexible guiding for girls, adults or units. You might want one group to focus on adults and one on girls or you might want all groups to have a balance - it's up to you. If each group has more than one card, you can repeat the following steps as required.

4. Get the discussion going

Issue the cards question-side up and ask participants not to turn them over until told. Ask each group to discuss their initial reactions to the question on their card - How would they personally respond to this question? What would happen

in an ideal world? What do they know to happen in their area?

After a minute, ask them to turn over the card and consider the discussion prompts. This will help keep discussions on track.

5. Collect feedback

Invite a spokesperson for each group to read the question from their card aloud. Ask for a summary of the key points of their discussion.

Try to involve others at this point by asking whether anyone else would respond differently to this scenario or whether they have some suggestions for alternative approaches, etc.

6. Be prepared to challenge or support

You'll find key points to share in relation to each question card within this pack. The same text is included in the supporting PowerPoint presentation. Going through the key points will help to squash myths or challenge local by-laws.

The cards and the answers are all numbered. Make sure you know in advance which numbered cards you're going to use so that you can find the relevant answers quickly (you could print the relevant pages from this pack beforehand).

7. Explore next steps

When you bring your discussions to a close, be sure to ask participants what they're going to do as a result of your session. They might feel ready to implement some of the ideas you've discussed or they might want to explore some of the resources that have been mentioned further. Everyone should be able to spread the word about flexible guiding.

How do I set the scene?

1. What is flexible guiding?

Flexible guiding is...

- Doing things differently to meet the needs of our current adults and young members
- Being flexible on venues, meeting times and frequencies, the roles we offer and how we run our leadership teams
- Breaking down barriers which prevent members from joining and/or getting the best out of guiding

What is flexible guiding?

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- Breaking down barriers which prevent members from joining and/or getting the best out of guiding



Activity Idea

If time allows, use this activity to introduce what flexible guiding is.

Ask participants to think of scenarios which would prevent their units meeting place being available - as wild and wacky as they like. Put the scenarios on a post-it. Next, ask everyone to mingle and swap post-its. Their challenge is to come up with equally wild and wacky solutions. Invite some people to share their challenges and solutions. This is the principle behind flexible guiding - thinking differently to overcome challenges

2. Why do we need flexible approaches?

This session can be Girlguiding Scotland's 2019-2021 Strategic Plan.

ACCESS is one of 4 themes within the 2019-2021 strategic plan:

Our ACCESS objectives:

- Every girl and young woman who wants to join guiding in Scotland will have the opportunity to do so
- Girls and adults from diverse backgrounds and communities across Scotland will want to join guiding
- Every adult volunteer will receive a warm welcome and an induction specific to their role

Thinking differently will bring new members into guiding and make the experience of existing members more rewarding.

Additional Information

Widening access to guiding is a strategic priority for Girlguiding Scotland because...

- Our girl membership is going down even though more than 12,000 girls join each year
- We're losing girls before they've been in guiding for 3+ years so they're missing out on lifelong benefits
- Girls are missing out in areas without any or not enough guiding
- Lives are changing and we need to make sure our offer meets the needs of today's girls and today's volunteers
- We need more adults to help run existing units and take the pressure off our current volunteers

Why do we need flexible approaches ?

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Activity Idea

Ask people to think about the membership challenges they have in their area:

- Do they have enough adults to support existing units?
- Do they have enough units to meet waiting list demand?
- Are girls moving between sections?
- Do they have guiding deserts where there are no units?

Card No. 1 (Flexible guiding for girls)

Card No. 1

Question:

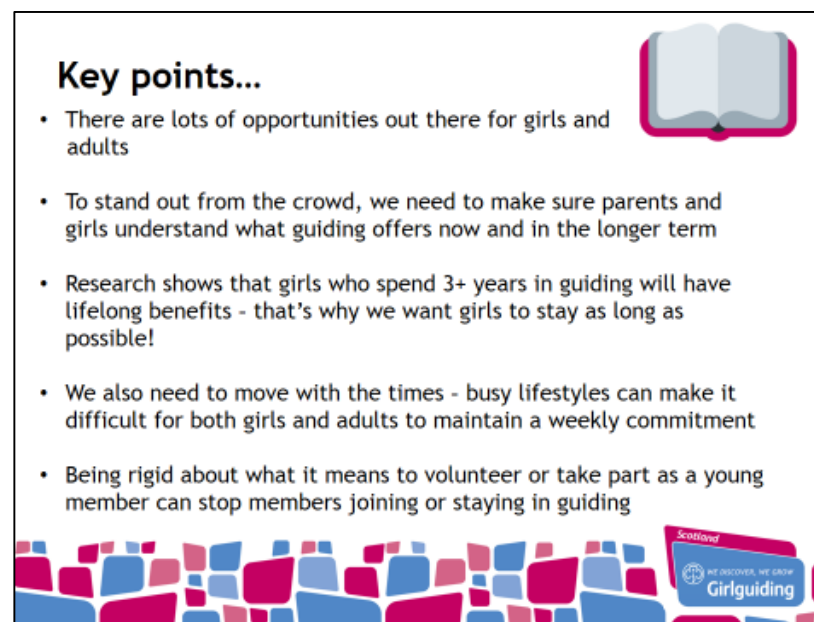
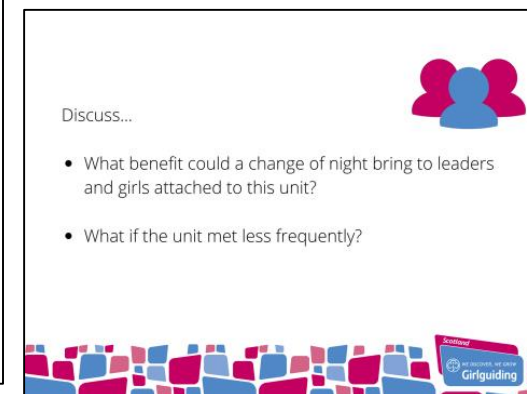
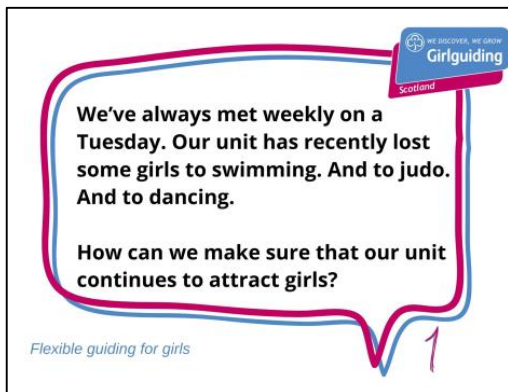
We've always met weekly on a Tuesday. Our unit has recently lost some girls to swimming. And to judo. And to dancing. How can we make sure that our unit continues to attract girls?

Prompts:

- What benefit could a change of night bring to leaders and girls attached to this unit?
- What if the unit met less frequently?

Key points

- There are lots of opportunities out there for girls and adults
- To stand out from the crowd, we need to make sure parents and girls understand what guiding offers now and in the longer term
- Research shows that girls who spend 3+ years in guiding will have lifelong benefits - that's why we want girls to stay as long as possible!
- We also need to move with the times - busy lifestyles can make it difficult for both girls and adults to maintain a weekly commitment
- Being rigid about what it means to volunteer or take part as a young member can stop members joining or staying in guiding



Card No. 2 (Flexible guiding for girls)

Card No. 2

Question:

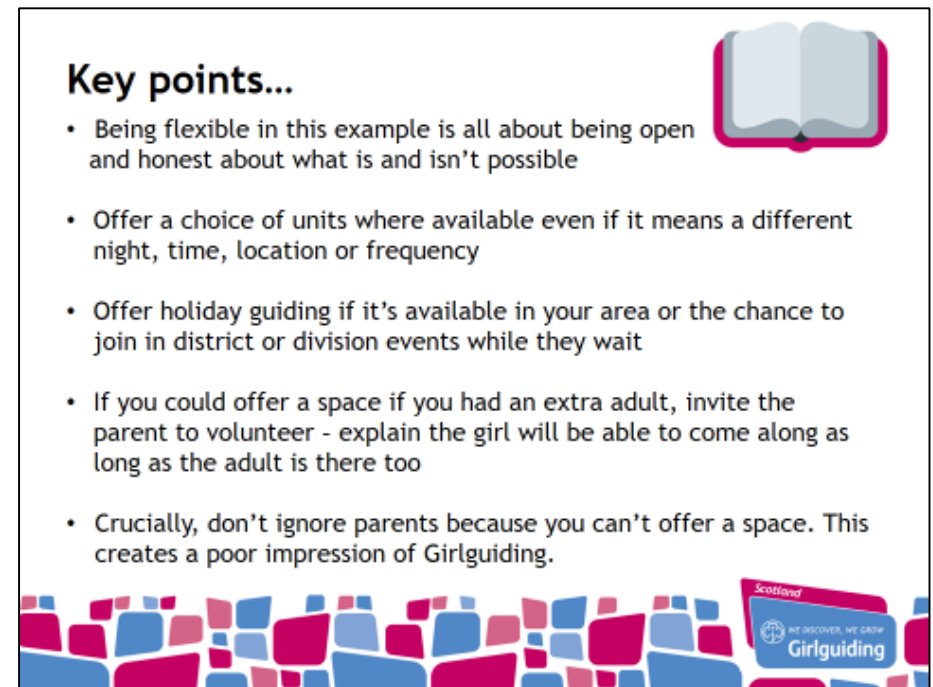
How could flexible approaches to guiding help girls on waiting lists?

Prompts:

- How could you make sure that waiting list parents know about alternative units without waiting lists?
- How could you run your waiting list to reward parents that step forward as volunteers?
- How could different meeting days or frequencies bring more girls into guiding?

Key points:

- Being flexible in this example is all about being open and honest about what is and isn't possible
- Offer a choice of units where available even if it means a different night, time, location or frequency
- Offer holiday guiding if it's available in your area or the chance to join in district or division events while they wait
- If you could offer a space if you had an extra adult, invite the parent to volunteer - explain the girl will be able to come along as long as the adult is there too
- Crucially, don't ignore parents because you can't offer a space. This creates a poor impression of Girlguiding.



Card No. 3 (Flexible guiding for girls)

Question:

We're trying to set up a unit in a new area. We've had interest from a few girls of different ages. How can we get guiding going with low numbers?

Prompts:

- How could taster sessions be set up to benefit girls and raise awareness?
- How could a joint unit help these girls?
- If the unit opens with low numbers, what ideas do you have to bring more girls in?

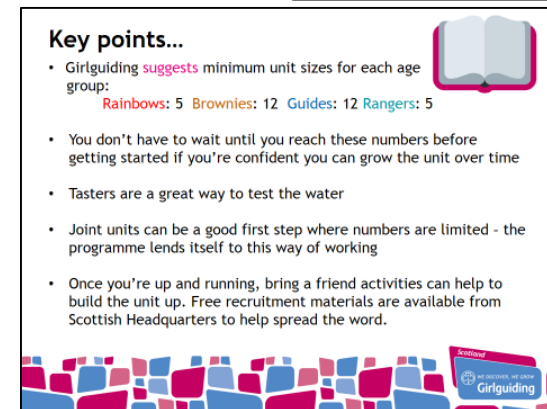
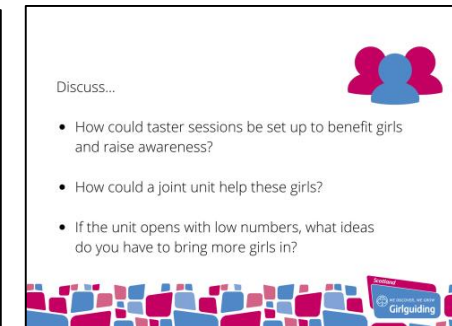
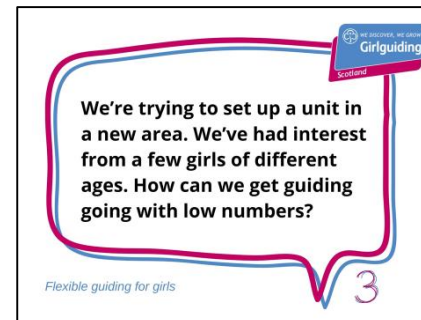
Key points:

- Girlguiding suggests minimum unit sizes for each age group: Rainbows: 5 Brownies: 12 Guides: 12 Rangers: 5
- You don't have to wait until you reach these numbers before getting started if you're confident you can grow the unit over time
- Tasters are a great way to test the water
- Joint units can be a good first step where numbers are limited - the programme lends itself to this way of working
- Once you're up and running, bring a friend activities can help to build the unit up. Free recruitment materials are available from Scottish Headquarters to help spread the word.

Card No. 3

Additional Information

- Small units might be needed where there's a low girl population or where you're introducing guiding for the first time
- Don't be afraid to start small. It's important to have enough girls to be able to run a good programme though - joint units are a good solution initially
- If the thought of running a taster event or bring a friend night is daunting, contact Scottish Headquarters for help.
- They'll share templates that can be adapted and/or put you in touch with other volunteers who have already run successful events.



Card No. 4 (Flexible guiding for adults)

Question:

How will being flexible help us to recruit parents into Girlguiding?

Prompts:

- What do parents think volunteering with us involves?
- Do you think parents understand that volunteers can be adult members and get member benefits?
- How could you challenge their assumptions and encourage them to get involved?

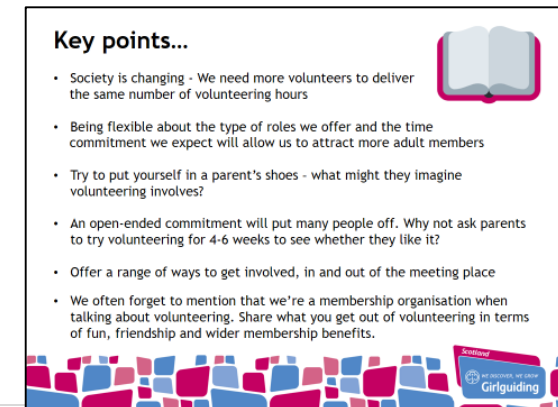
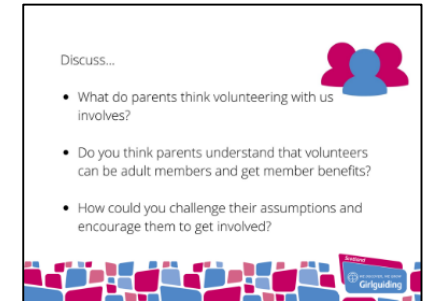
Key points

- Society is changing - We need more volunteers to deliver the same number of volunteering hours
- Being flexible about the type of roles we offer and the time commitment we expect will allow us to attract more adult members
- Try to put yourself in a parent's shoes - what might they imagine volunteering involves?
- An open-ended commitment will put many people off. Why not ask parents to try volunteering for 4-6 weeks to see whether they like it?
- Offer a range of ways to get involved, in and out of the meeting place
- We often forget to mention that we're a membership organisation when talking about volunteering. Share what you get out of volunteering in terms of fun, friendship and wider membership benefits.

Card No. 4

Additional Information

- Parents will have built up an idea of what it is to volunteer based on what they see and hear about the unit
- Challenge their perceptions by offering a range of ways to get involved and offer a short-term trial initially.
- Emphasise that it's ok not to want to volunteer in the meeting place every week.
- Many will assume that being a leader is the only option.
- Or that only women can volunteer.
- If you need a template letter to send to parents about volunteering options, contact Scottish Headquarters.



Card No. 5 (Flexible guiding for adults)

Question:

We can't get enough volunteers to support a new weekly unit but want to get it going before the holidays. What options do we have?

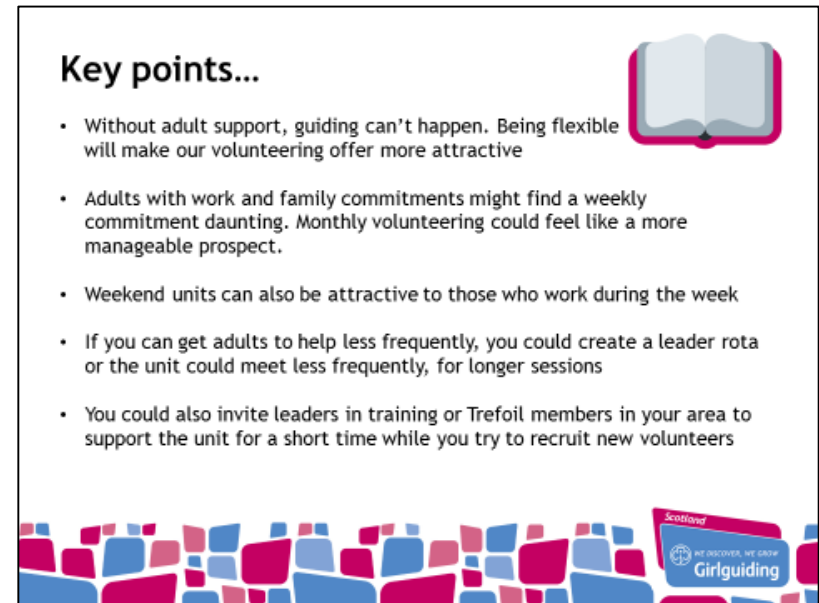
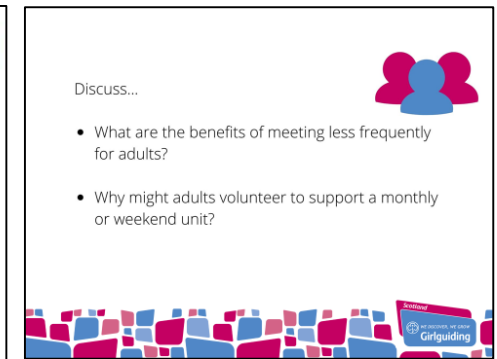
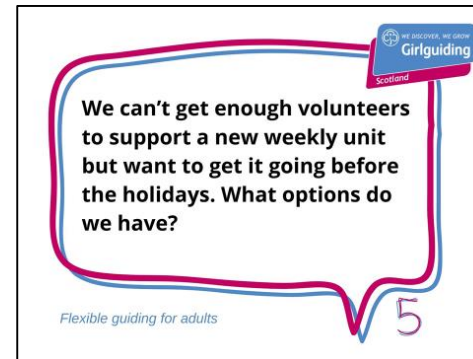
Prompts:

- What are the benefits of meeting less frequently for adults?
- Why might adults volunteer to support a monthly or weekend unit?

Key points:

- Without adult support, guiding can't happen. Being flexible will make our volunteering offer more attractive
- Adults with work and family commitments might find a weekly commitment daunting. Monthly volunteering could feel like a more manageable prospect.
- Weekend units can also be attractive to those who work during the week
- If you can get adults to help less frequently, you could create a leader rota or the unit could meet less frequently, for longer sessions
- You could also invite leaders in training or Trefoil members in your area to support the unit for a short time while you try to recruit new volunteers

Card No. 5



Card No. 6 (Flexible guiding for adults)

Question:

We need to change our meeting night. How do I manage the process of switching nights with parents?

Prompts:

- What needs to be considered when deciding when the unit should meet?
- What options can the leader present to parents?

Key points:

There are lots of reasons why the night might need to change including venue availability or a lack of volunteers or girls

Being open and honest about why the night night needs to change is key

Give advance notice that this might need to happen unless parents can offer an alternative solution - give a deadline for them to make suggestions

Practical things to consider include volunteer and girl numbers, venues and other activities going on in the community

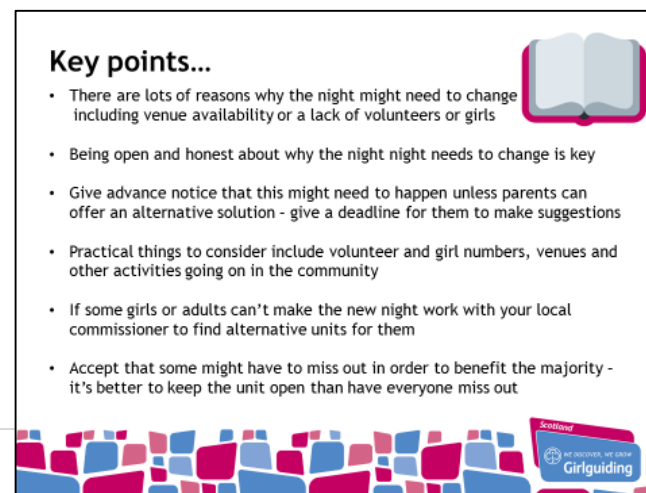
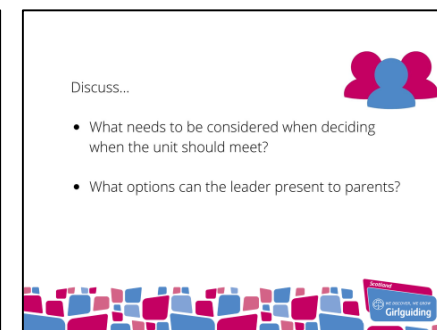
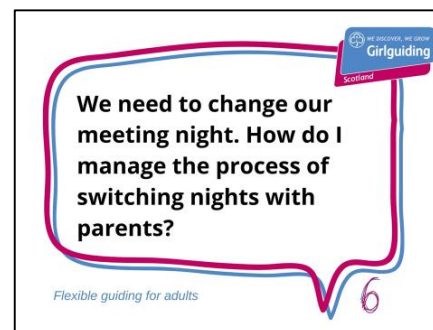
If some girls or adults can't make the new night work with your local commissioner to find alternative units for them

Accept that some might have to miss out in order to benefit the majority - it's better to keep the unit open than have everyone miss out

Card No. 6

Additional Information

- There are practical things to consider when deciding which night to meet
- You need to have enough girls and adults to run - whether they are already in the unit or coming off the waiting list
- You need to find an affordable and safe venue
- You need to think about what else is on in the community - what will you be competing with?
- If your current night isn't working, frequent and honest communication with parents is key - involve them in making decisions rather than presenting them as a done deal



Card No. 7 (Flexible guiding for adults)

Question: What is the point of asking students to volunteer as I believe they are unreliable and won't stick around?

Prompts:

- What are the benefits of involving students in your unit during term-time?
- How can girls going off to college or university keep in touch with their 'home unit'?

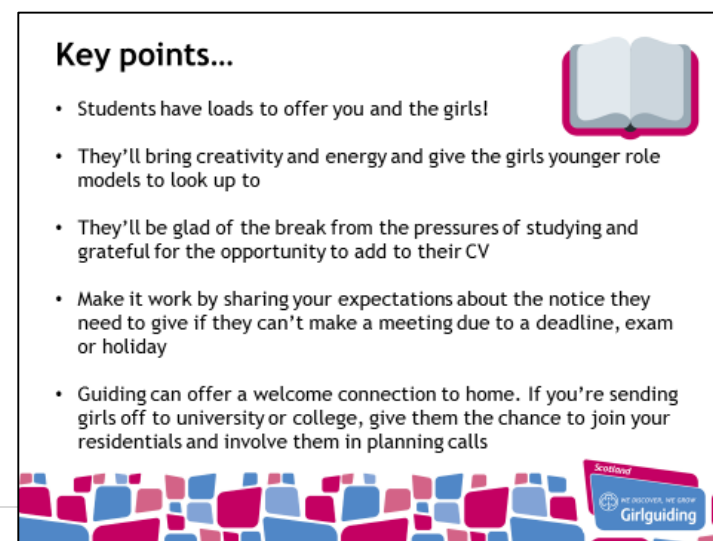
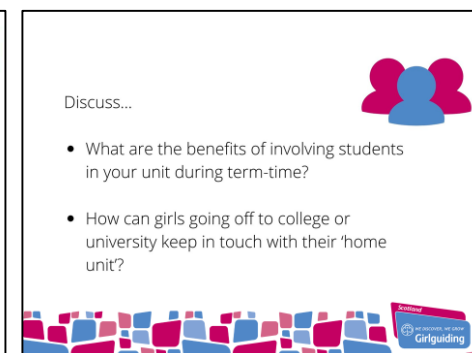
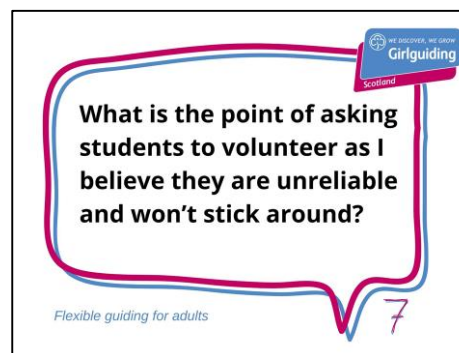
Key points:

- Students have loads to offer you and the girls!
- They'll bring creativity and energy and give the girls younger role models to look up to
- They'll be glad of the break from the pressures of studying and grateful for the opportunity to add to their CV
- Make it work by sharing your expectations about the notice they need to give if they can't make a meeting due to a deadline, exam or holiday
- Guiding can offer a welcome connection to home. If you're sending girls off to university or college, give them the chance to join your residentials and involve them in planning calls

Card No. 7

Additional information

- How often do we hear that students are unreliable or will 'only' commit for 4 years?
- Guiding has loads to gain from involving students. They will often bring invaluable experience and enthusiasm.
- Guiding has loads to offer them too. This can be a challenging period with lots of change and guiding can offer stability and a connection to home.



Question:

I hate admin and I'm not that confident using GO. Can I ask someone to do this for me or are strangers not allowed access to the data?

Prompts:

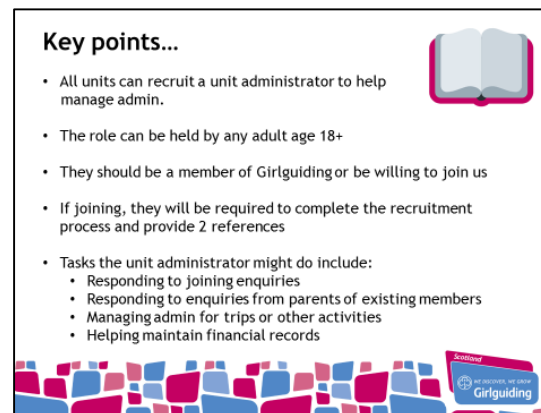
- What are the recruitment processes to ensure new volunteers receive the support, training and checks necessary?
- How could you recruit someone to help with admin specifically?

Key points:

- All units can recruit a unit administrator to help manage admin.
- The role can be held by any adult age 18+
- They should be a member of Girlguiding or be willing to join us
- If joining, they will be required to complete the recruitment process and provide 2 references
- Tasks the unit administrator might do include:
 - Responding to joining enquiries
 - Responding to enquiries from parents of existing members
 - Managing admin for trips or other activities
 - Helping maintain financial records

Additional information

- Girlguiding have produced a role description for a unit administrator. Contact Scottish Headquarters for an electronic copy or search the Girlguiding website.
- Scottish Headquarters can also help place online adverts to help you recruit to this role.
- Administrators don't need to be PVG-checked and can be men or women. Remember that everyone is new at some point.
- There are lots of people who work in admin who could lend their skills to guiding.



Card No. 9 (Flexible guiding for adults)

Question: How long do you have to volunteer with us to make a valuable contribution?

Prompts:

- When you joined guiding how long did you think you would stay?
- How do we make sure we respond warmly to offers of help?
- How can we ensure that all contributions are valued?

Key points:

- Every contribution to guiding is valuable.
 - Whether involving unit guiding or a support function
 - Whether short-term or long-term
 - Whether regular or occasional
- If we have a fixed idea of what being a 'valuable' volunteer means we will miss out on useful skills and experience that will benefit both adults and girls already in guiding
- People volunteer for lots of different reasons and all are valid. We can help people boost their CVs, learn new skills, have fun and make friends in exchange for their time, skills and enthusiasm
- Talk to current and potential volunteers about what they can offer and what they want to get out of guiding - it's a two way exchange!

Card No. 9

Additional information

- When we recruit, we're often focused on filling a gap. Urgently.
- Taking time to find out what someone wants to get out of guiding and what their skills are will help us match people to the right roles.
- This is a useful analogy to describe how we sometimes approach recruitment:
You attend a speed dating event. You meet someone with similar values. There's an instant spark. You're excited to getting to know them more. From nowhere they propose marriage and insist they won't see you again if you're not ready to set the wedding date.

How long do you have to volunteer with us to make a valuable contribution?

Flexible guiding for adults

9

Discuss...

- When you joined guiding how long did you think you would stay?
- How do we make sure we respond warmly to offers of help?
- How can we ensure that all contributions are valued?

Key points...

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- Talk to current and potential volunteers about what they can offer and what they want to get out of guiding - it's a two way exchange!

Card No. 10 (Flexible guiding for adults)

Question:

My friend got a new job. She works shifts now. She was told she had to come every week or leave. Is there a way for her to stay involved in guiding?

Prompts:

- Why should we try to accommodate changes in circumstances?
- What options are there for people who can't volunteer every week?

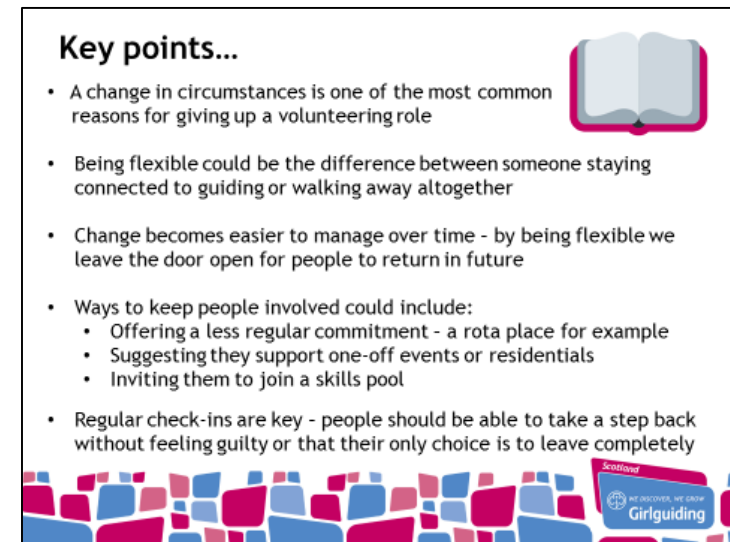
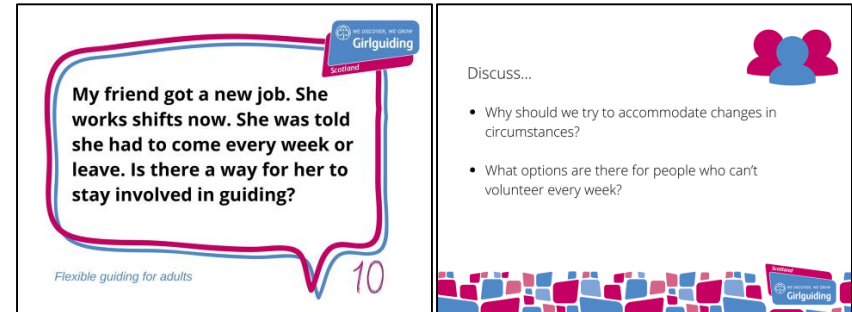
Key points:

- A change in circumstances is one of the most common reasons for giving up a volunteering role
- Being flexible could be the difference between someone staying connected to guiding or walking away altogether
- Change becomes easier to manage over time - by being flexible we leave the door open for people to return in future
- Ways to keep people involved could include:
 - Offering a less regular commitment - a rota place for example
 - Suggesting they support one-off events or residentials
 - Inviting them to join a skills pool
- Regular check-ins are key - people should be able to take a step back without feeling guilty or that their only choice is to leave completely

Card No. 10

Additional information

- Not sure what a skills pool is or how to set one up? There's a handy guide on the Girlguiding website.



Question:

What is holiday guiding and why might it be attractive to girls and adults?

Prompts:

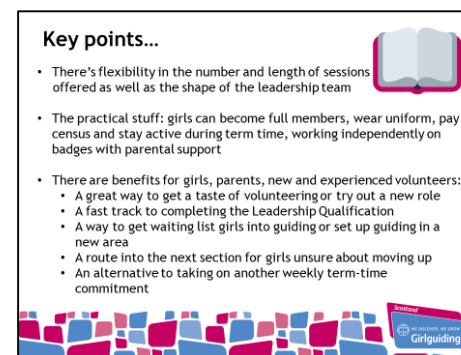
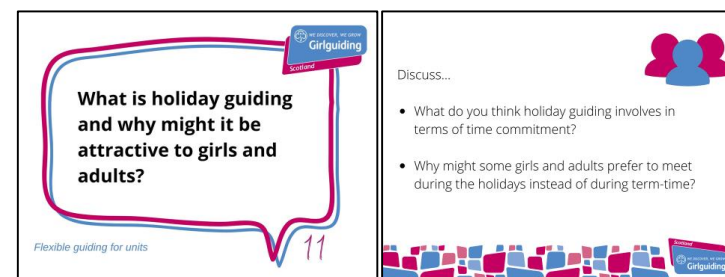
- What do you think holiday guiding involves in terms of time commitment?
- Why might some girls and adults prefer to meet during the holidays instead of during term-time?

Key points:

- There's flexibility in the number and length of sessions offered as well as the shape of the leadership team
- The practical stuff: girls can become full members, wear uniform, pay census and stay active during term time, working independently on badges with parental support
- There are benefits for girls, parents, new and experienced volunteers:
 - A great way to get a taste of volunteering or try out a new role
 - A fast track to completing the Leadership Qualification
 - A way to get waiting list girls into guiding or set up guiding in a new area
 - A route into the next section for girls unsure about moving up
 - An alternative to taking on another weekly term-time commitment

Additional information

- Holiday guiding can be an amazing experience for both adults and girls!
- It doesn't mean giving up your whole holiday to guiding. Most holiday projects involve a rota so that leaders swap in and out
- Holiday units can be added to GO and parents can sign up girls in the usual way
- Girls can cover a terms worth of guiding over a week. They can become full members, making the promise, wearing uniform and paying census
- The Flexible Guiding in Action Case Study pack includes Scottish examples of holiday guiding projects



Question:

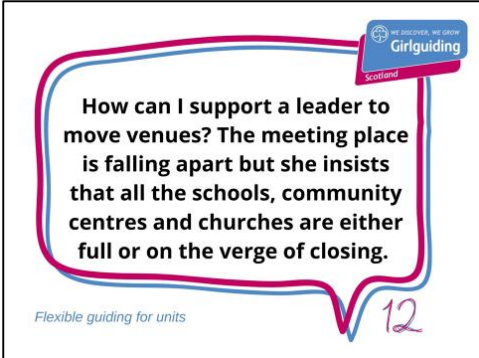
How can I support a leader to move venues? The meeting place is falling apart but she insists that all the schools, community centres and churches are either full or on the verge of closing.

Prompts:

- What other venues could be used as unit meeting places?
- If you can't think of alternative venues in your area, who could you approach for help?

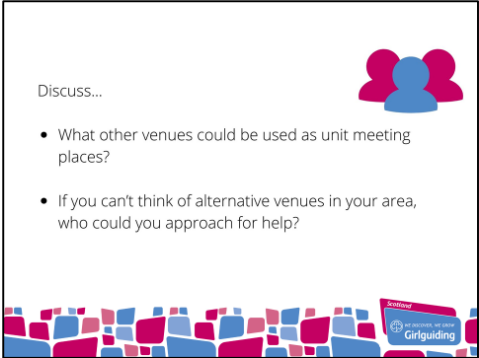
Key points:

- Being flexible about venues could enable at risk units to stay open
- If a space has been risk assessed and deemed safe, you can hold a unit there
- Ask friends, colleagues and parents to recommend venues they know of - you might be surprised about the connections they have
- Venues to consider include supermarkets, cafes, gyms, sports centres, hotels, conference centres, libraries, museums and galleries, other charities, office buildings, medical centres, hospitals and many more!
- Don't rule out venues because they're usually closed in the evenings



How can I support a leader to move venues? The meeting place is falling apart but she insists that all the schools, community centres and churches are either full or on the verge of closing.

Flexible guiding for units




Discuss...

- What other venues could be used as unit meeting places?
- If you can't think of alternative venues in your area, who could you approach for help?

Key points...

- Being flexible about venues could enable at risk units to stay open
- If a space has been risk assessed and deemed safe, you can hold a unit there
- Ask friends, colleagues and parents to recommend venues they know of - you might be surprised about the connections they have
- Venues to consider include supermarkets, cafes, gyms, sports centres, hotels, conference centres, libraries, museums and galleries, other charities, office buildings, medical centres, hospitals and many more!
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Rounding Up



End your session by encouraging participants to identify one thing that they will do as a result of the discussions they've had



Don't worry if your session throws up some questions you can't answer. The Membership Development Team at Scottish Headquarters is here to help you as a trainer or commissioner as well as the volunteers in your area. They will signpost you to resources, offer advice and guidance and share details of projects that have already happened.

Contacts: membershipadmin@girlguiding-scot.org.uk

Phone: 0131 226 4511

Useful Links

→ Flexible volunteering

<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/making-guiding-happen/growing-our-membership/recruiting-and-retaining-volunteers/flexible-volunteering/>

→ Involving parents

<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/making-guiding-happen/growing-our-membership/recruiting-and-retaining-volunteers/involving-parents/>

→ Involving students

<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/making-guiding-happen/growing-our-membership/recruiting-and-retaining-volunteers/involving-students/>

→ Volunteer roles in guiding

<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/making-guiding-happen/volunteer-roles-in-guiding/>

→ Unit role requirements

<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/globalassets/docs-and-resources/membership-administration/go/unit-rationalised-roles.pdf>

→ Holiday guiding

<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/making-guiding-happen/growing-our-membership/recruiting-and-retaining-girls/holiday-guiding/>

→ Different meeting times

<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/making-guiding-happen/growing-our-membership/recruiting-and-retaining-girls/holding-meetings-at-different-times/>

→ Different meeting venues

<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/making-guiding-happen/growing-our-membership/recruiting-and-retaining-girls/using-different-venues/>

→ Different unit models

<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/making-guiding-happen/growing-our-membership/recruiting-and-retaining-girls/combining-sections-and-units/>

→ Including all

<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/making-guiding-happen/running-your-unit/including-all/>

→ Social inclusion

<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/making-guiding-happen/running-your-unit/including-all/social-inclusion/>

→ Starting a new unit

<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/making-guiding-happen/running-your-unit/starting-a-new-unit/>